

University of Warwick institutional repository: <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap>

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of Warwick**

<http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap/55827>

This thesis is made available online and is protected by original copyright.

Please scroll down to view the document itself.

Please refer to the repository record for this item for information to help you to cite it. Our policy information is available from the repository home page.

MANTUA UNDER GIANFRANCESCO GONZAGA

(1407 - 1444)

WAR, POLITICS AND DIPLOMACY IN A LOMBARD BUFFER  
STATE

A thesis presented by Roberto Allen Roberts  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in  
the Graduate School of Renaissance Studies,  
University of Warwick.

University of Warwick,  
Coventry CV4 7AL

April 1981. . .

**PAGE  
NUMBERS  
CUT OFF  
IN  
ORIGINAL**

## CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
<u>SUMMARY</u>	i
<u>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.</u>	iii
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	1
Notes to Introduction	8
<u>CHAPTER 1 - THE POLITICAL LEGACY OF THE TRECENTO.</u>	
I.        The Strategic Position of Mantua.	10
II.       The Rise of the Gonzaga	12
III.      The Diplomacy of the fourteenth Century.	17
IV.       Conclusion.	40
Notes to Chapter 1.	46
<u>CHAPTER 2 - THE EARLY YEARS (1407 - 1420).</u>	
I.        Gianfrancesco's succession.	52
II.       The Arrangements for the Regency.	61
III.      The Orientation of the New Regime.	69.
IV.       Marriage.	77
V.        The Albertini Ascendancy and its Consequences.	82
VI.       Widening Experience	109
<u>CHAPTER 3 - GIANFRANCESCO GONZAGA AND THE FIRST PHASE OF THE                 LOMBARD WARS (1420 - 1432).</u>	
I.        Introduction.	134
II.       Mantua and the Build-up of Tension in Lombardy.	135
III.      The Progress of the War up to the First Peace of Ferrara.	166
IV.       The Downfall of Carmagnola.	214
Notes to Chapter 3.	239



## CONTENTS

## Page

### CHAPTER 4 - THE RELUCTANT COMMANDER (1432 - 1438).

I.	Introduction.	266
II.	The Captain Generalship and the Imperial Title.	268
III.	Uneasy Peace in Lombardy 1433-1437.	298
IV.	War and Disillusionment.	318
V.	The Drift Towards Milan.	338
	Notes to Chapter 4.	359

### CHAPTER 5 - THE SERVANT OF THE VISCONTI (1438 - 1442).

I.	Gianfrancesco and Filippo Maria Visconti.	382
II.	The Crisis of 1438.	385
III.	Mantua Against Venice.	415
IV.	The Failing War Effort and the Peace of Cavriana.	428
	Notes to Chapter 5.	477

### CHAPTER 6 - THE FINAL YEARS (1442 - 1444)

	Notes to Chapter 6.	521
--	---------------------	-----

### SOURCES

524

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

525

### GIANFRANCESCO'S FAMILY

535

### SUPPLEMENT OF MAPS

I.	The Battle Area of the Lombard Wars (1425 - 1442).
II.	Towns and Cities of Northern Italy.

## SUMMARY

This thesis aims to assess the importance of Gianfrancesco Gonzaga and his state in early quattrocento politics. The central geographical position of Mantua placed it in the forefront of the conflict between Venice and Milan which dominated Gianfrancesco's life. It was a conflict during which both protagonists tried to exploit Mantua to further their own expansionist aims.

Such a clash of interests naturally placed immense pressures upon Gianfrancesco. As always, his primary aim was to maintain the existence of his state and this meant that he had to manoeuvre himself between the two rivals. He was to place the strategic advantages of Mantua and his own talents as a military commander first of all at the disposal of Venice, the traditional ally and protector of the Mantuan state, and subsequently, in 1438, when he became suspicious of Venetian motives, at the disposal of Filippo Maria Visconti. The central portion of the thesis investigates Gianfrancesco's relations with these two very different masters and attempts to clarify the issues and motives which prompted his change of loyalty in 1438.

In many respects, the role which Gianfrancesco was called upon to play was an unenviable one. While it is true that he himself obtained a considerable degree of prestige as Commander of the Venetian army as well as the 'kudos' of an Imperial title, the dual role of ruler and soldier of fortune which had been thrust upon him bristled with problems, and these are also investigated in this study.

The period of Gianfrancesco's rule provides us with an excellent opportunity to observe the problems and decisions which confronted a small state like Mantua at a time of political crisis. The part which Gianfrancesco and Mantua played in that crisis has been underestimated and this thesis attempts to redress the balance.

---

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

### 1. ARCHIVES

Arch. Gon.	Archivio di Stato, Mantua (Archivio Gonzaga).
A.S.M.	Archivio di Stato, Milan.
A.S.V.	Archivio di Stato, Venice.
B.	Busta (Mantua).
cart.	Cartella (Milan).
L.S.C.	Lettere Segrete del Collegio (Venice), vol. iv.
S.S.	Senatus Secreta (Venice).

### 2. PERIODICALS

A.S.L.	Archivio storico lombardo.
R.A.V.M.	Atti e memorie della Reale Accademia Virgiliana di Mantova.
R.I.S.	Rerum Italicarum Scriptores (ed. L.A.Muratori, Milan, 1723 - 51).
R.I.S. n.s.	Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, new edition (ed. G.Carducci & V. Fiorini, Città di Castello 1900ff.)

### 3. ABBREVIATED TITLES OF OTHER WORKS

Aliprandi	Aliprandi, B., <u>Cronaca di Mantova</u> (R.I.S.n.s., vol. xxiv).
Da Soldo	Da Soldo, C., <u>Cronaca</u> (ed.G.Brizzolara, R.I.S.n.s. vol. xxi).
Equicola	Equicola, M., <u>Historia di Mantua in libri cinque</u> (Mantua 1610).
Osio	Osio, L., <u>Documenti diplomatici tratti dagli Archivi Milanesi</u> , (Milan 1877, reprinted, 1970).
Platina	Platina (Sacchi, B.), <u>Historia inclytæ urbis Mantuæ et Serenissime familiae Gonzagæ</u> (Vienna 1675).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS cont.

- Treccani (Br.) Fondazione Treccani degli Alfieri, Storia di Brescia  
(Milan 1963), vol.2.
- Treccani (Mi.) Fondazione Treccani degli Alfieri, Storia di Milano  
(Milan 1955), vol.6.
- Sanuto Sanuto, M., Le vite dei Duchi di Venezia (R.I.S. vol.xxii)

## INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

When the Gonzaga gained control of Mantua in 1328 by seizing power from the Bonacolsi family this was not hailed as anything particularly startling or new. Such a process of inter-family rivalries within Italian city states was an established fact of life. What was so much of an achievement was the length of time which Gonzaga rule in Mantua lasted. Their tenure of power for the better part of four hundred years is very surprising; especially in the context of the political vicissitudes which they had to live through. In a very real sense the history of Gonzaga supremacy in Mantua is a classic lesson in the art of political survival, and never more so than in the period of Gianfrancesco Gonzaga at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

In general terms the achievement of the fourteenth century had been the establishment of Gonzaga supremacy in Mantua and the establishment of Mantua as a significant factor in the political and diplomatic life of Lombardy. The fourteenth century, as we shall see, provided the Gonzaga with valuable experience of the problems of survival in the widest sense; lessons which the Gonzaga were not slow to learn and to put to good use in the serious situation which was to develop in the 1420's when they became inevitably embroiled in the clash between the two great territorial states of Milan and Venice. In particular, the fourteenth century had taught the need for the maintenance of an active and varied diplomatic life and also of the supreme importance of internal stability and security. <sup>1/</sup>

Gianfrancesco Gonzaga was called upon to maintain and develop the achievement of the trecento. The fourteenth century may well have been a crucial one for the establishment of the Gonzaga as a family, but the early

fifteenth century involved both the destiny of the Gonzaga as rulers of Mantua and, more especially, the survival of Mantua itself as an autonomous unit. In this sense the problems of the trecento were greatly accentuated. It was precisely because Gonzaga supremacy was no longer seriously challenged in Mantua that the fate of the family and the fate of the state became inextricably combined. It was this added dimension which was to condition the policies and diplomacy of the early fifteenth century. There was now very much more to lose. It was a situation which, to a certain extent, was externalised by a desire to make Mantua into a cultural centre in which the added prestige would underline Mantuan autonomy.

The rule of Gianfrancesco Gonzaga (1407-1444) has been unjustly neglected by scholars. <sup>2/</sup> As yet there is no scholarly assessment of this period as a whole. <sup>3/</sup> While it is true that the history of Mantua as a whole is better served today than it was by Brinton and Quazza <sup>4/</sup> there is still a great deal of scope for a more analytical approach. This is especially true with regard to the period covered by this particular study. It may well be true that Gianfrancesco is overshadowed by his successors in the later fifteenth century when Mantua became firmly established as a cultural Renaissance centre; but it is all too easily forgotten that such an achievement rests firmly upon the basis established largely by Gianfrancesco. His rule is an excellent example of the sort of policies which smaller states needed to adopt in the political and diplomatic atmosphere of the age and as such is able to give us a valuable insight into the conditions which motivated smaller states at a crucial period which witnessed the pressures generated by the larger territorial states.

No one can doubt the extreme importance of the history of northern Italy in the early fifteenth century. Especially, it provides a background



without which the real extent of the so-called 'crisi militare' cannot be understood. In itself it is a very important transitional period in a number of senses. First, the evolution of large states such as Milan and Venice created considerable diplomatic problems; the prime question being one of the relative balance of power between them. This inevitably affected the fortunes of the smaller states, especially as regards diplomatic alignment. Secondly, under the pressures which this situation generated, states were compelled to review their military organisation and their military defences. In particular, we see a much more permanent relationship developing between state and military commander and a careful organisation and development of military resources. Thirdly, because of the nature of the aims involved in the inter-state conflicts there is a parallel development in military techniques.

The history of Gianfrancesco is a very important case history in all these respects. Mantua's position as a buffer state, one of the best examples in Italy, dictated a flexible and vigilant diplomacy in which Gianfrancesco had to be continually reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of neighbouring states in a period of considerable flux. In addition to this Gianfrancesco was able to use his own military experience as a further selling-point to supplement the advantages which could accrue from Mantua's position geographically as a 'fulcrum' between Milan and Venice. Furthermore, because the aims of the war between these states were imperialistic, the 'decelerated' and more static type of warfare which this involved (of necessity) and the important need for the maintenance of acquisitions, dictated a change in the approach which the state adopted towards military problems to parallel this political need.

A study of Mantua in this transitional period is an important illustration of such generalizations. Because it is a 'pressure point' or

an exemplum of larger issues, a history of Mantua at this time can go a long way to explaining the sometimes complex and seemingly unintelligible fluctuations in inter-state relationships.

The paucity of scholarship is even more surprising because of the wealth of archive material which exists in the Gonzaga Archive in Mantua for this period. Despite the somewhat uneven documentation which exists for the very earliest years, it is extremely full for the most crucial sections of the period covered by this study. Because the Gonzaga were very careful to keep their records there is consequently a very full documentation of their policies and projects. Not only can we discover the details of the policies themselves, but we can also trace the discussions which went on beforehand. It is not surprising that the Mantuan archive has frequently provided material which has either disappeared or did not exist in other documentary collections. <sup>5/</sup> It is interesting and significant to note that the 'E' series which deals with foreign correspondence conducted by the Gonzaga occupies 1,600 out of a total of 3,719 buste; an excellent indication of the importance attached to diplomacy.

In his commentary, Luzio emphasises the importance which the Gonzaga attached to the selection of ambassadors, who were encouraged, rather like their Venetian counterparts, to submit very full reports which not only covered aspects relating to a particular mission, but which took in any other information about the general situation which could possibly be useful to Mantua:

"...l'inviato di Mantova era perciò trattato quasi abitualmente su un piede di familiarità, che ad ambasciatori delle maggiore potenze restava gelosamente interdetto, per non lasciar sorprendere, nell'abbandono di confidenti colloqui, le segrete motivazioni d'una troppo spesso tortuosa politica."

In the 'E' series there are some 35 buste dealing with our period, in addition to numerous references in the 'B' (treaties) and 'F' (home affairs) series as well as the 'Libri dei Decreti' and the 'Gridario' for internal affairs. The Gonzaga were also careful to keep copies of the letters which they sent to their ambassadors and to other states, a factor which greatly facilitates the work of the historian. Similarly there also exist copies of letters which were sent from other states in order to inform Gianfrancesco of events elsewhere in Italy. In this respect Niccolò III d'Este's correspondence is very revealing about events in Tuscany and the Romagna. The impression certainly is that during our period Mantua would appear to be a sort of 'clearing-house' for diplomatic information.

In addition to this there is a good documentation of Gonzaga relationships with the provincial areas of the Mantuan state. Such sources frequently provide a commentary upon the larger affairs of state. It is easy to forget that as far as internal defence was concerned, and the Gonzaga had a persistent preoccupation about this, a co-operative effort was essential. <sup>7/</sup>

The chronicle sources for this period are of variable value. <sup>8/</sup> In many cases their accounts do tend to be somewhat coloured by their indebtedness to the Gonzaga or otherwise. However, if one makes allowances for this, such writers as Equicola,<sup>9/</sup> Aliprandi<sup>10/</sup> and Platina<sup>11/</sup> present, in varying degrees, a sense of the continuity of events which documentary sources amplify and correct.

In the light of the documentary sources available this present study aims to look more closely and more analytically than hitherto at

the rule of Gianfrancesco Gonzaga in order to give a clearer picture of its true significance. It aims to show that the strategic position of Mantua in the diplomatic context of the age dictated a complex diplomacy, that<sup>of</sup> a buffer state in which decisions were sometimes incredibly difficult to make. However, in the light of this it also serves to illustrate the motivation which runs through Gianfrancesco's policy. His actions, far from being faithless or capricious, were directed to one single end - the maintenance of Mantuan autonomy at a time when the threats to its very existence were at their greatest. In examining in detail, the policies of Gianfrancesco with their constant modulations, the personalities and pressures which were to influence them, and the extent of his diplomatic activity both within and outside Italy together with its military implications, it is hoped to clarify still further the day to day realities involved in running an Italian state of these dimensions. Furthermore, this study aims to assess the externalisation of such policies in the way in which Mantua projected its image in Italy; how, under the pressure of external political and diplomatic events, Mantua was to project a much more aggressive spirit of corporate identity. The Gonzaga were to give a recognisable guise to this; not only in the sense of the prestige which the marquissate bestowed upon Gianfrancesco by the Emperor Sigismund in 1432 generated, but also in the attempts made to make Mantua into a centre of cultural achievement. There is a political side to the presence of such people as Vittorino da Feltre and the establishment of the Mantuan 'studium', both encouraged by Gianfrancesco, as well as the more obvious cultural side.

In short, in attempting to assess the significance of these events in the context of general trends, it will be seen that the rule of Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, as well as being a period of broad continuity with the past, is also in a very real sense a period of beginnings. Many of those trends which put

Mantua on the map both in diplomacy and culture stem from this period; a point which has been too easily glossed over in the past. One recent writer while acknowledging Gianfrancesco's military qualities, nevertheless wrote of him as "mediocre ma non sgradevole".<sup>12/</sup> A man who could manoeuvre himself and his state between such formidable forces as Filippo Maria Visconti and the Venetian Senate certainly does not deserve such a weak epithet. Although young and inexperienced when he succeeded his father on the 20th March 1407, he soon showed that he appreciated the legacy of the trecento and was willing, and indeed capable, of using it.

## INTRODUCTION

### Notes

1. For a detailed consideration of diplomacy in the fourteenth century see B.M.L.Waller, The Diplomatic Relations of the Gonzaga of Mantua in the Fourteenth Century. This is an unpublished B.Litt. thesis in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, (1953)
2. The most recent work is a chapter in the Storia di Mantova ed. G.Coniglio (Mantua 1959), vol. 1. ch. 4, but it is only a very general survey occupying some ten pages.
3. A certain amount was done by F. Tarducci some 70 years ago; notably "Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, Signore di Mantova (1407 - 1420)", A.S.L. xxix 1902; and "L'Alleanza Visconti-Gonzaga del 1438 contro la Repubblica Veneta", A.S.L. xi, 1899. There is very little or nothing on the later part of the period.
4. S.Brinton, The Gonzaga Lords of Mantua (London 1927) which covers the whole period in about ten pages. Quazza, Mantova Attraverso i Secoli, (Mantua 1933).
5. There are a number of descriptions of the Mantuan Archive. One of the best is A.Luzio, "L'Archivio Gonzaga di Mantova.". See especially volume two: "La Corrispondenza familiare, amministrativa e diplomatica del Gonzaga" Publ. R. Acad. Vir. di Mantova, ser. 1. Monumenta vol. 2 (1922). Not only is there a valuable commentary, but there is a detailed inventory of the contents of the buste. See especially pp.11-35.
6. Luzio, op.cit., p.76. He remarks that the Gonzaga frequently used either family or close friends or people bound closely to them by service or patronage on important diplomatic missions.
7. There is a useful discussion of this aspect in G.Coniglio, "Fonti Archivistiche per la Provincia di Mantova", A.S.L. Ser. 8, x, 1960. The Archivio di Stato contains a large collection of local history documents. Of particular interest is the Archivio Comunale at Piubega. See also C.D'arco, Studi Intorno al Municipio di Mantova (Mantua 1871). Volume six contained the "De officio domini Potestatis eiusque vicari" which Gianfrancesco published in 1432. A useful study is also A. Bertolotti, I Comuni e le Parrocchie della Provincia di Mantova (Mantua 1893) vol. I.
8. For a discussion of this see Intra. "Degli Storici e dei Cronisti Mantovani", R.A.V.M. 1877-8.
9. M. Equicola Historia di Mantova in Libri Cinque (Mantua 1610), pp.109-188.
10. B.Aliprandi, "Cronaca di Mantova", in R.I.S. n. ser. vol. XXIV. This chronicle only goes up to 1414 but is useful in the sense that it is a much more objective account.

INTRODUCTION cont.

11. Platina, Historia Inclytae Urbis Mantuae et Serenissime Familiae Gonzaga, (Vienna, 1675), pp.293-388. (Gianfrancesco Gonzaga). Luzio (op.cit. p.11) also praises J.Daino De Genealogia Illustrissime Dominorum de Gonzaga (Arch. Gon. B.416) and Intra (op.cit.) recommends Nerli's "Breve Chronicon" (R.I.S. ser. appendix to vol.XXIV) although the references for our period are few. The chronicle ends in 1418.
12. A. Muriga in I Gonzaga, (Milan 1972), p.10.

CHAPTER 1

THE POLITICAL LEGACY OF THE TRECENTO



CHAPTER 1THE POLITICAL LEGACY OF THE TRECENTOIThe Strategic Position of Mantua

"Di fronte agli stati di Milano e Venezia, Mantova figurava un po' come un vaso di terracotta, costretto a viaggiare con vasi di ferro. Tutta la politica de' Gonzaga nei secoli XIV-XV si risolve in una forzata altalena tra due calorosi vicini che potevano schiacciare o assorbire chi non aveva nessuna inclinazione ad esser divorato." 1/

So wrote Luzzo, one of the most scholarly directors of the Mantuan Archive. The Mantuan image is certainly a colourful and compelling one in that it perfectly sums up the strategic situation in which Mantua found itself. How had this situation evolved in the fourteenth century and what precisely were the lessons which experience had taught the Gonzaga?

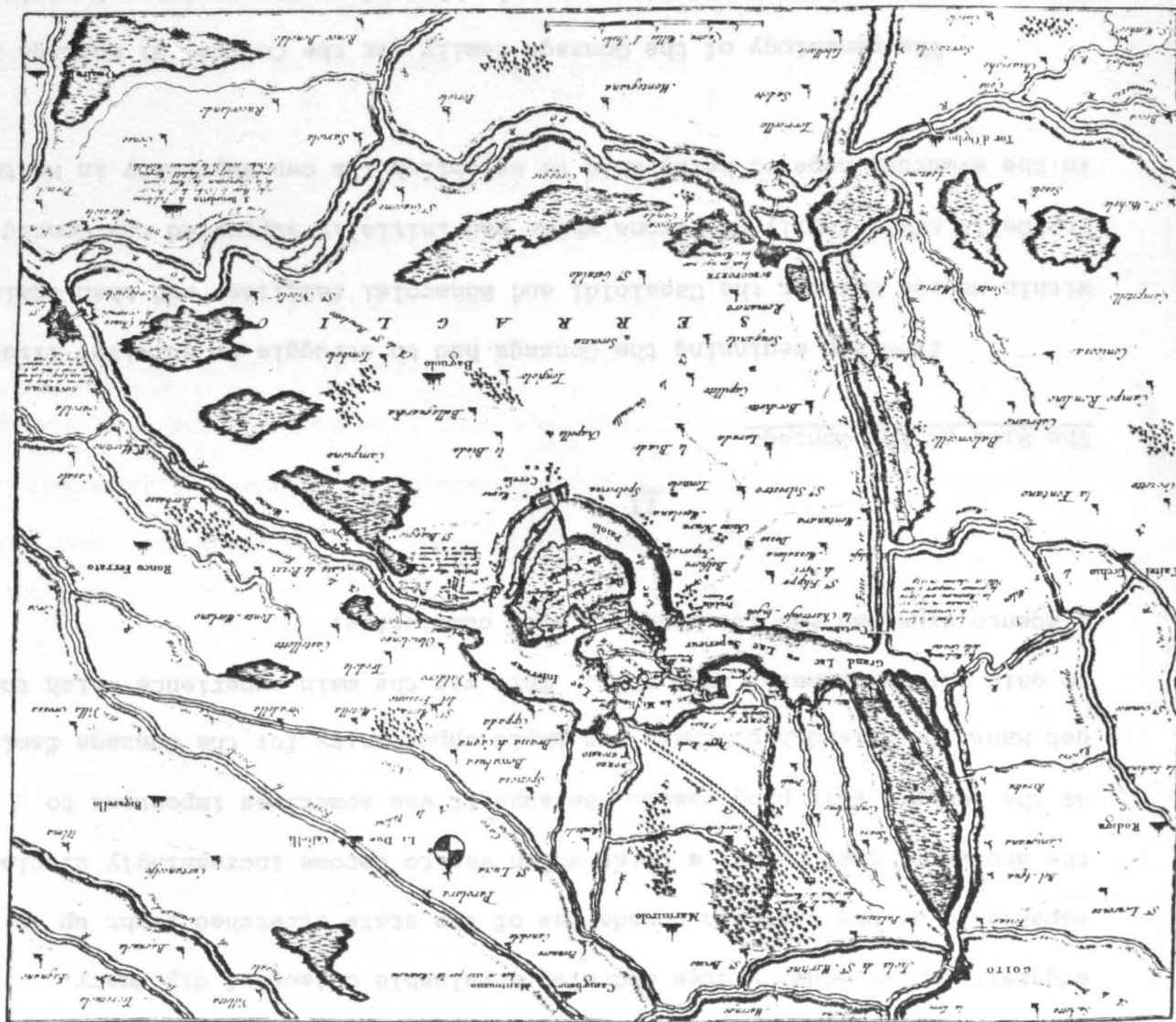
The starting point for any discussion of Mantua must always be an appreciation of its geographical position. The first and most obvious observation is that it lies roughly equidistant from Milan and Venice and that it is encircled by a number of smaller cities, namely Brescia, Cremona, Parma, Ferrara and Verona. This was to be the area of the most active Gonzaga diplomacy.

The city of Mantua itself is situated on an island formed by two branches of the river Mincio, which flows from Lake Garda. This is part of a network of rivers, such as the Adda, the Oglio and the Adige which flow into the Po. There are many other smaller rivers, but this division of the Lombard Plain into a number of compartments separated by rivers was to be an important determining factor as far as military tactics and strategy were concerned. 2/

The natural defensive position of the city was further improved in the thirteenth century by a scheme which was intended to control the flooding which the variable level of the Po sometimes caused in the area around the twin branches of the Mincio. <sup>3/</sup> The scheme involved the construction of dams to regulate the normal flow of the river which subsequently formed the three lakes (Superiore, di Mezzo and Inferiore) which surrounded the northern side of the city. Some thirty years later it was completed by the Lago di Païolo and the creation of the Serraglio. The latter scheme fulfilled the double function of providing adequate defences on the southern side of the city and also ensuring the safety of an extensive area of good agricultural land. Not only is the creation of the Serraglio a significant piece of engineering, but it also shows an early appreciation of the defensive possibilities of the city. <sup>4/</sup> The fact that the second stage in the fortification of Mantua's natural position was prompted by Ezzelino da Romano's siege of 1256 shows an ability to learn from experience which was to be repeated consistently during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It led to the construction of solid fortifications at Curtatone, Governolo and Borgoforte, with its all-important bridge, which could act as a lifeline for supplies and reinforcements. As the fourteenth century progressed it became increasingly important for the Gonzaga to ensure that these primary defences were kept in good order.

Similarly, the destruction of this defensive ring of fortifications became an obsession with Mantua's enemies. An extreme example of this is when in 1393 Giangaleazzo Visconti tried to divert the Mincio to drain the protective ring of lakes. The maintenance of defences was also a frequent bargaining counter in diplomacy. It was with ample justification that Platina could say that Mantua was "*omnium urbium italicarum natura loci et manu munitissima*". <sup>5/</sup>

THE MANTUAN SERRAGLIO



MANITOBE ON TON VOIT TOUT LE SERRAVALLO PAR R K I O T T E N S (Copyright) A. L. Williams.

It can be seen, then, that geographical and strategic factors are a continuing preoccupation in two basic senses; firstly in the defence of the city itself and of its immediate surroundings, and secondly, in the implications which this had for other states. The geographical location of Mantua made it at the same time a potentially valuable acquisition for other states and also a valuable object of diplomacy, especially as the northern boundaries of the state stretched right up to the shores of Lake Garda, a point which was to become increasingly crucial as the Lombard Wars progressed. Because it was sometimes important to get Mantua's friendship, there was ample opportunity for the Gonzaga family to gain maximum benefit from this. This was the main experience which the trecento provided and its benefits were cumulative.

## II

### The Rise of the Gonzaga

From the beginning the Gonzaga had to struggle to survive: first within Mantua against the Casaloldi and Bonacolsi families, and then against the Della Scala family of Verona which had initially supported the Gonzaga in the eventual hope of being able to establish its own supremacy in Mantua. 6/

The genealogy of the Gonzaga family, or the Corradi di Gonzaga as they were originally termed, is extremely blurred at its source. Luzio's researches have brought many fabrications and documentary falsifications to light. <sup>7/</sup> It would appear that there is very little evidence to support the exalted theories of the family's origins which were put forward in the seventeenth century by the Gonzaga themselves.

Although the family is mentioned in 1199 in the affairs of Mantua when Gualtiero and Corrado were named as having taken part in the peace negotiations between Mantua and Padua, <sup>8/</sup> it seems very likely that the family had not emerged as an important one in Mantua until a relatively short time before the assumption of power in 1328. As late as 1268, for instance, they are not included by the chronicler Aliprandi among the foremost families of Mantua in his 'Annales Mantuani'. <sup>9/</sup> - However, this does not mean that certain members of the family were insignificant. In fact, it is largely through the dynamism of these early Gonzaga that the family gradually brought itself to public attention. As early as 1228 Giovanni da Gonzaga was important enough to be appointed a canon of the cathedral.

In fact, it is to the Church that the Gonzaga largely owed their position as a landed family. They held extensive lands from the monastery of San Benedetto in Polirone. The first benefactor here was Gualtiero da Gonzaga in 1196. The investitures of land were regularly renewed, the last one being in 1392 when Pope Boniface IX's donation granted the lands to the Gonzaga in their own right. <sup>10/</sup> As far as area was concerned, however, the property which they owned around Marmirole was the most extensive, and it was upon this basis that the wealth and position of the family were to be built.

As early as 1257 it would appear that they were seen as a possible threat to be reckoned with in the future. The geographical positioning of their lands between Mantua and Reggio from the beginning dictated a complex policy, something which was to resemble very closely the diplomatic situation of Mantua itself in the early fifteenth century. The very fact that they were expelled from Reggio in 1257 and again from Mantua in 1264 proves how much they were regarded as potential rivals by the established families.

By capitalizing upon inter-family rivalries the Corradi di Gonzaga were most effectively to make their bid for social advancement. In the late thirteenth century their main rivals were the Casaloldi family, who were second only in importance to the ruling Bonacolsi. The jealousy of the Casaloldi had previously resulted in the confiscation of the Marmirolo estates,<sup>11/</sup> and consequently it proved relatively easy for Pinamonte Bonacolsi to secure Gonzaga support in order to expel the Casaloldi in 1272.

The success of this 'coup' contributed considerably to the growth of the family's importance. Part of the Casaloldi patrimony was granted to the Gonzaga in 1272 and this, together with the recovered lands of Marmirolo, meant that the Gonzaga had joined the ranks of the foremost landowners in the area.

This could be regarded as the real 'take-off' point for the political advancement of the family. From now on the Gonzaga are closely associated with the Bonacolsi in the affairs of the city. In 1279 in the ratification of the peace between Verona, Brescia and Mantua the first citizen named after the Bonacolsi is Antonio Gonzaga.

After having eliminated their most powerful rivals the Gonzaga increased in wealth and influence very rapidly indeed. By the beginning of the fourteenth century their possessions were extensive and included lands in Brescia, Ferrara, Reggio, Cremona, and Ivrea.<sup>12/</sup> Such landed wealth, combined with the lands (including important castles) in the Mantovano itself made the Gonzaga not only a powerful force in the area, but tended to encourage even greater aspirations. If their territories were, in effect, more extensive than those of the Bonacolsi,<sup>13/</sup> it would appear to be the

next logical step to supplant them as the most important family in Mantua. The whole process is yet another illustration of the intrinsic problems which tended to beset prominent families in city-states of this kind. In effect the Bonacolsi, in encouraging Gonzaga support to expel the Casaloldi, had merely succeeded in putting the Gonzaga in their place. In essence the political balance within Mantua had not changed and it could be argued that in rewarding the Gonzaga the Bonacolsi were only encouraging them to set their political sights even higher. It was, in the final analysis, a dilemma which they could not escape from and which was to teach the Gonzaga a valuable lesson; that of being able to consolidate their position so securely that they did not depend to any great extent upon the support of any other single family within Mantua.

It is clear that by this period the Gonzaga were showing a much greater vitality than the Bonacolsi. They most certainly showed an appreciation of the value of marriage in strengthening their position. A series of very profitable marriages was responsible in great part for the consolidation of land. Territories in Cremona and Brescia were thus acquired by the marriages of Filippino Gonzaga to Anne of Dovara and of Luigi Gonzaga to Richelda Ramberti respectively. Throughout the later history of the family and especially during Gianfrancesco's time, there is a great emphasis, sometimes even obsessive, not only on contracting marriages which would also benefit the family territorially, but also on marriages which would raise the prestige of the family both at home and abroad.. In this respect a good example is the double marriage which was contracted in 1354 with the House of Habsburg <sup>14/</sup> which was to be echoed in Gianfrancesco's period by the marriage of his son Ludovico to Barbara of Brandenburg. As we shall see, the preoccupation with extra-Italian relationships, particularly with Germany or the Empire,

was to be quite a consistent theme in Gonzaga policies. Although, judging from his will in 1221, Gualtiero Gonzaga could be regarded as the founder of the family's fortunes, the eventual stability of the family is surely due to Luigi, who lived surprisingly into his nineties and had nineteen children by three marriages and who was the nominal head of the family at the time the Gonzaga took over in 1328.<sup>15/</sup> In reality power seems to have rested in the hands of his three eldest sons Guido, Filippino and Feltrino. With their considerable talent for governing, combined with the fact that Luigi was grooming his favourite grandson, Ugolino, for eventual office, it appeared at the outset that the Gonzaga succession was assured. The assertiveness and dynamism of these crucially important members of the family certainly showed itself in the delicate period after the 'coup' in which firmness and a sound sense of direction were all-important.

The origins of the conspiracy are very difficult to clarify. It would seem that there were other elements in addition to the ambitions of the Gonzaga themselves who, by this time were the only viable alternative to the Bonacolsi. In his 'Cronaca Universale' Amadei relates how contemporaries sensed that for some time resentment had been building up against the Bonacolsi, and such events as the killing of Alberto de' Conti di Riva, a prominent citizen, tended to emphasise it. They even suggested that there was a smouldering resentment between the two families because of an illicit affair between Franceschino Bonacolsi and Filippino Gonzaga's wife, but this is not given any substance by a complete lack of documentary evidence.<sup>16/</sup>

It is certainly true that Cangrande I della Scala of Verona had a definite interest in the successful outcome of the revolt. The Della Scala of Verona were very powerful and Cangrande was very alive to the possibilities inherent in getting a foothold in Mantua.<sup>17/</sup> One of the most enthusiastic



supporters of the revolt of 1328 was Guiglielmo di Castelbarco, son-in-law of Luigi, who commanded a detachment of men sent especially by Cangrande to support the rebels. It is almost certain that Luigi himself played little or no part directly in the coup. The main motive force came from his sons and, if we are to judge by subsequent events, from Cangrande himself. <sup>18/</sup> There seems to have been very little opposition offered and events on the 16th August moved quickly. Rinaldo Bonacolsi was killed in the fighting and a few days later Luigi was given the charge of governing the city by public acclaim. The Gonzaga family had finally 'arrived', but the fact that Cangrande had played an important part in this immediately placed an intolerable limitation on their freedom of action. Luigi and his sons were soon to find out that their problems were only just beginning.

### III

#### The Diplomacy of the Fourteenth Century

While it is true that an important theme of the fourteenth century is the Gonzaga freeing themselves from the threats posed by the Scaligeri, they are nevertheless acting in a new political milieu. The decline of Imperial power in Italy after the successes of Henry VII's expedition combined with the absence of the Papacy from Italy meant that there were no longer any checks on the more dynamic states of the North. Despite the relative impotence of the Emperors in terms of real power, the Gonzaga were to be consistently concerned with the prestige which Imperial recognition seemed to give; moreover, the Gonzaga were most anxious to obtain Imperial recognition of their hereditary rights to the vicariate of Mantua and it sometimes seemed that the legal rights were more important than real tangible possession. <sup>19/</sup>

Later on this obsession was to be extended to negotiations for the erection of the Mantuan territory into a Marquisate. Francesco tried to obtain this title from Wenceslaus in 1395 but negotiations broke down over the question of cash. <sup>20/</sup> This was to continue long after the Gonzaga had firmly established themselves. The history of the Emperor's dealings with Mantua is a very telling illustration 'in parvo' of the true nature of imperial power in Italy. <sup>21/</sup>

In terms of real power, however, the most tangible experiences were to be gained from the relationships with other Italian states. Here the fourteenth century shows the intense vitality of the Gonzaga in that we see a consistent policy of territorial aggrandisement. This was to be achieved from the start by using the bait of Mantuan alliance in playing one state off against the other. In the fourteenth century this involved the Visconti and the Scaligeri. At the outset the Gonzaga were forced to exploit the political situation of the day out of a need for sheer political survival in the formative period of growth. Because it was never really possible to remain aloof from active involvement in Lombard affairs the Gonzaga quickly learned that it was politically unwise to align oneself too rigidly to one particular side and it became almost an axiom of policy to maintain as many diplomatic channels open for as long as possible and as long as it suited Mantuan interests to do so. For instance, although the Gonzaga got inevitably caught up in what passed in theory for a Guelf-Ghibelline struggle, the alignment was never constant. Indeed, as with other Italian states during this period, the ideological connotations of Guelf and Ghibelline had ceased to have any relevance at all. Mantua was only Ghibelline in the 1320's out of self interest in order to ally with Verona in order to reap any territorial benefits at the cost of the Guelf centres of Ferrara, Reggio or Modena. In 1341 it suited Mantua to be Guelf because

of the renewed dangers which came from Verona. <sup>22/</sup> There were a number of considerations which always affected such changes. Firstly, there was this policy of the avoidance of over-commitment, and secondly, there was always a great need to observe closely the orientation of the most dynamic power, Milan; especially the attitude which it was to adopt towards Verona. Thirdly, in the background there was always felt to be an important need not to jeopardise relations with Venice because commercial relations were so valuable to Mantua. <sup>23/</sup> At the end of the fourteenth century this commercial relationship was to be transformed into a political one; especially when Venice decisively entered the political arena after 1397. Because of all these political considerations it could be argued that diplomacy operated on two levels; on the surface an attempt, frequently a strained one, to keep on friendly terms, and beneath the thin veneer there was the vital question - which side would help more effectively to preserve Mantuan interests? This is why there is such a constant momentum in Gonzaga diplomacy. The picture was also complicated by the need to observe the movements of smaller towns and cities, but in the final analysis it was the larger states which counted.

While this is not the place to present a very detailed appreciation of the fourteenth century situation <sup>24/</sup> it is, however, necessary to establish some sort of perspective through which the early fifteenth century can be viewed. Generally speaking, the period divides itself into two halves, dominated respectively by relations with the Scaligeri and the Visconti. Inevitably there is a certain degree of overlap which tends to be superimposed by the continuing problem of Imperial recognition and alignment.

Whatever judgement may be passed upon the nature of Gonzaga diplomacy in the trecento, it must always be recognised that it depended

implicitly upon stability at home in the first instance. There is little or no impression of discord in relation to Luigi's policies within Mantua itself. In fact, the changeover of power in 1328 seems to have been achieved very smoothly. On the 28th August Luigi was named as Captain-General of the Comune and was given the right to nominate a successor.

Luigi's three sons seemed to work well together and this was probably due to the fact that each tended to specialise in one particular aspect of policy. Feltrino was in charge of defence, Guido was the diplomat, and Filippino had a considerable amount of military talent.<sup>25/</sup> For the first half of the century at least, there was an absence of any real discord which was surprising in a family so large. However, in the second half of the century, as we shall see, this harmonious picture was to change and bring with it inevitable diplomatic complications.

It was fortunate that at the outset of their rule the Gonzaga were unhampered by any constitutional wranglings. All that had occurred was a simple transference of power from the Bonacolsi. There were no flickerings of the spirit of the Comune in Mantua; this had already been quenched as early as 1308.<sup>26/</sup> However, the family was wise to refrain from an ostentatious display of political power in this delicate period of transition.

The formal alliance of the 17th August 1329,<sup>27/</sup> between the Gonzaga and Alberto and Mastino della Scala seemed on the surface to be merely a renewal of the agreement of mutual friendship reached with the Bonacolsi; but, as later events turned out, added to the fact that the

della Scala had helped the Gonzaga in the previous year, it can be seen as yet another stage in the insinuation of that family into Mantuan affairs. <sup>28/</sup> It was also connected with the expedition of Lewis of Bavaria in 1327-9 and the possible danger of a Guelf reaction from Robert of Anjou. We can see, then, that almost immediately the Gonzaga were drawn into issues which had wider implications than those of their immediate locality.

The expedition of John of Bohemia in 1330, however much it might have produced a Ghibelline reaction, also shows the blurring between the two sides. The possibility of an accord between John and the Papacy produced an Italian League at Ferrara in September 1332 which consisted of both Guelfs and Ghibellines. Such a league is a sure indication that behind the now bankrupt notions which such titles once implied the main motives were those of territorial expansion.

During this period it was Verona, rather than Milan or Venice which was undergoing the most vigorous expansion and the fact that Scaligeri interests in Tuscany and the Veneto produced an inevitable reaction of resentment from other states tended to compromise Mantua's position even though the Gonzaga were trying to remain aloof from the impending conflict as much as possible.

By 1336 the Scaligeri state had reached such an advanced state of development that the absorption of Mantua now only seemed a matter of time. <sup>29/</sup> There is even documentary evidence of a plot to assassinate the most important members of the Gonzaga family. <sup>30/</sup>

Both Florence and Venice were frightened at such a dangerous rival both for economic as well as political reasons and negotiations were begun which were to result in the first anti-Scaligeri League of June 1336. In this the Gonzaga and the Este to a certain extent were placed in a very difficult position. They were very nervous of the Della Scala but were very unwilling to antagonise them even further by an open support of their enemies since it was by no means certain that the league would be strong enough to defeat them. It was, of course, impossible to remain diplomatically on the fence without any ill effects. The Venetians had previously been on excellent terms economically with the Gonzaga and Luigi had been admitted to the Venetian nobility.<sup>31/</sup> But now Mantua and Verona were both subjected to economic sanctions. In addition to this all Mantuans who had resided in Venice for less than a year were ordered to leave.<sup>32/</sup>

The situation for the Gonzaga was far from easy and their position was made more difficult by the renewed attempts to get them to join the League. Together with the Visconti and the Este they were invited to Venice, ostensibly to try to negotiate a peaceful settlement, but in reality it was an attempt to detach the Gonzaga from the Veronese alliance. The aims of the League were made remarkably clear; it was nothing short of the complete destruction of the power of the Scaligeri.<sup>33/</sup> It was when the aims and the extent of the League and its potential strength were discovered that the Gonzaga began to waver in their Veronese alliance.

On the 10th March 1337 Mantua, Ferrara, Florence, Venice and Milan joined together with the rebel town of Reggio against the Scaligeri and it was agreed that Mantua would be the base for the main attack on Verona

itself in which the size of the armies involved was considerable. <sup>34/</sup>  
 It is interesting to note that Guido played a very important part in these negotiations.

As it turned out, the Gonzaga had acted wisely in joining the League, because the outcome of the war was completely to cripple the Scaligeri state. The treaty which ended the war was signed on the 24th January 1339 and it virtually amounted to a dismemberment of the territories to the advantage of Florence, Venice, Milan and the Carrara of Padua. The revolt of Parma in 1341 also meant that Lucca was virtually lost. In fact Mastino was forced to sell it to Florence for the sum of 250,000 florins. The Scaligeri only retained Verona and Vicenza.

Although the Scaligeri were no longer a force to be reckoned with does not mean that they had ceased to figure in Lombard affairs. Although superficially the relations with the Gonzaga had improved after the war there was always in reality a tremendous amount of mutual suspicion, and up to 1350 Mastino was always looking for an opportunity to revenge himself upon the Visconti and the Gonzaga and from time to time, despite the repeated attempts of Clement VI to compose their differences, there were minor incidents which tended to keep the Gonzaga continually vigilant.

One important result of all this was that it placed the Gonzaga in much closer contact with the Visconti and this new orientation was to become much more pronounced in the 1340's. It became an important part of Mantuan policy to draw closer to Milan while maintaining good relations with Venice. In the early '40's the Viscontean attachment is shown in a number of ways. On 20th August 1341 the Gonzaga joined in a mutually

defensive league lasting for ten years with Milan, Riniero da Donoratico, Lord of Pisa, and with the Correggio family against Lewis of Bavaria. Also from this time there was a Mantuan agent resident in Milan.

This rapprochement with Milan tended to exacerbate once again the rather delicate relationship with Verona. <sup>35/</sup> Indeed, there is every justification for Waller's reference to the Scaligeri as the 'bête noire' of Gonzaga diplomacy. <sup>36/</sup>

In 1341 the Gonzaga were closely associated with Viscontean interests in Tuscany, when Pisa appealed for Milanese help against what it regarded as an increased threat from Florence after their acquisition of Lucca. In fact Filippino was appointed to take command of any military operations. <sup>37/</sup>

It soon appeared to many of the smaller 'signorie', however, that although the Della Scala state had been destroyed, another state was beginning to take its place - Milan - and the reactions to this new threat by Florence, Venice, Ferrara and the Papacy were once again to complicate Gonzaga diplomacy. While the advantages of allying with a state in the ascendant were self evident these always had to be weighed against the strength of potential opposition, a situation very similar to that of the '30's with Verona.

In order to examine this proposition perhaps a good example is the 'war' of Parma of October 1344. The Visconti had designs upon this city which had been sold by Azzo da Correggio to Obizzo d'Este for a sum of 60,000 florins. Such a situation virtually made war inevitable. The pattern of alignment is a very characteristic one, that of the Este, the



Scaligeri, the Pepoli, and the Da Polenta against the Visconti and the Gonzaga. The base for operations was Reggio and once again Filippino was to spearhead the attack.

The situation is very interesting because it does reveal the intrinsic character of the relationship between Milan and Mantua in which Luchino Visconti was using the Gonzaga to further his own ends. As far as Milan was concerned there appears to be little concern over any reassurances Mantua might want. This is borne out by the way in which events turned out. In the end there was no military action and Obizzo agreed to sell Parma to the Visconti. The Gonzaga were not included in the treaty between Milan, the Della Scala and the Estensi, even though they did have assurances of Milanese protection.

This protection, however, was not always forthcoming. For instance, in July 1345 Luchino refused to send men to defend Mantua from the possibility of attack by Veronese troops in transit for Parma. In the following year only little was done to alleviate the pressure of Veronese incursions into the Mantovano. This alarming state of affairs was a pre-echo of what was to happen in that crucial year of 1438. As the Viscontean ambitions in the Bresciano and the Cremonese, in which the Gonzaga possessed territory, <sup>38/</sup> made the Gonzaga aware of their status *vis-a-vis* Milan, another much more frightening danger loomed over the horizon, the threat of political isolation. The dangers of this situation became very apparent in 1348 when Luchino began to pick upon the slightest pretext to cause trouble between Mantua and Cremona. Because of the military superiority of the Milanese the Gonzaga were ultimately in no position to resist by their own unaided efforts even though frantic attempts were made to prevent matters from escalating.

As was expected the Milanese were very successful. Not only were the territories in the Bresciano and Cremonese occupied but Milanese troops entered the Mantovano itself. They reached Curtatone after having sacked the surrounding area.

Surprisingly, however, no further advance was made due to internal disputes in the army and also to the strength of the fortifications of the Serraglio. It was an unexpected outcome and although Aliprandi paints a picture of triumph,<sup>39/</sup> this fortuitous result was not to end the Milanese threat by any means.

Although there was a temporary check to Milanese policy by the death of Luchino in 1349, the Milanese occupied areas were much too close to Mantua for comfort and in 1354 the Milanese were using such areas as Rubiera, Coriano and Sologno as bases for an attack upon Reggio and Modena. Although there was a certain amount of success at the outset when a contingent of Mantuan and Venetian troops under the command of Filippino repulsed a Milanese attack from the Bresciano, the situation soon became very dangerous indeed. No doubt encouraged by the avowed intention of the Emperor Charles IV to support the anti-Viscontean leagues,<sup>40/</sup> there was an association in 1356 of the Gonzaga and the Estensi to fight against Francesco Ordelaaffi of Forlì who was struggling against the papal legate Albornozy to keep his independence. Bernabò Visconti supported him because he himself had ambitions of expansion in the Romagna. This was an excellent opportunity for Bernabò to settle once and for all with the Gonzaga and, despite some early Mantuan successes, primarily at Reggio and Borgoforte, the Serraglio was soon overrun and Mantua itself was cut off from the outside

world. There were desperate attempts by Ugolino Gonzaga to raise more men but the situation was hopeless and when negotiations were opened in March 1358 the Gonzaga had no alternative but to give in to the humiliating demands of surrendering all their patrimonial possessions in return for which they became the vassals of the Visconti. <sup>41/</sup>

For the time being Milan was too powerful and Mantua too vulnerable. Until its defences could be rebuilt it was unwise for the Gonzaga to commit themselves very far in any direction.

It was clear that whatever success the Gonzaga may have achieved in the first half of the fourteenth century was, to a considerable extent, due to the unity of purpose within the family. Whether or not he was merely a figurehead, the patriarchal figure of Luigi was a stabilizing factor. His death in 1360 heralded a much more unstable period. A certain amount of jealousy now became apparent, especially at the prominence and encouragement which Luigi gave to his favourite grandson Ugolino, Guido's son, who was being groomed to succeed his father as third captain of Mantua. Guido's other two brothers who had worked with him had now faded from the scene. Filippino had died in 1356 leaving a daughter and Feltrino and his family had retired to Reggio.

Ugolino was now the dominating influence in Mantua. He had proved himself an able administrator and displayed a considerable interest and talent in diplomacy. Having married Bernabo's niece Caterina he was in a fairly influential position. Ugolino's prominence, encouraged by his grandfather, provoked the jealousy not only of his two brothers Ludovico and Francesco, but also of his two cousins, the sons of Feltrino. Indeed

it has been suggested that one of the reasons for Feltrino's family retiring to Reggio was due to this intolerable position in Mantua.

This resentment boiled over in an attempt in 1356 by Feltrino's sons to assassinate Ugolino. Although the plot was discovered and the matter ended in a rather 'touching' family reunion, it was nevertheless significant that the sons fled to Verona after this plot was discovered; a taste of the special difficulties which could be created by family troubles of this nature, especially when it involved a question of political power. <sup>42/</sup>

Luigi's two surviving sons never really made up their quarrel and Feltrino, in his attempts to keep control of Reggio, generally allied with anti-Viscontean leagues and this tended to compromise Guido's relations with Milan. However, it was not merely a question of alliances; the family rivalries were unfortunately to have more tangible results. Ugolino was finally assassinated by his brothers in 1362; Francesco in his turn was assassinated by Ludovico in 1368 who finally ensured that an ordered form of succession from father to son was achieved.

The unsavoury spectacle of a family tearing itself apart cannot have failed to attract the attention of the rest of Northern Italy. In particular, the murder of Ugolino produced a violent reaction from Bernabò Visconti. The Della Scala, who never ceased to be vigilant in their attempts to revenge themselves upon the Gonzaga now saw this as a marvellous opportunity. Cansignoria della Scala suggested an alliance with Bernabò to revenge Ugolino's death. <sup>43/</sup> It is not really clear why the campaign came as late as 1368 but it may be partly explained by the

fact that Cansignorio only turned to Bernabò as a last resort after having failed in his attempts to provoke further discord within the family by playing on the resentment felt by the children of Luigi's second marriage at their being virtually excluded from any power. In particular Corrado had gone to Verona in 1366 according to Aliprandi.<sup>44/</sup> He may well have been urged by Cansignorio to write a letter to Ludovico warning of a plot against him by his own brother Francesco. In the circumstances Ludovico behaved with admirable restraint in showing the letter to his brother and his cousin Antonio who was also implicated. Their violent denials and in particular Antonio's anger resulted in his challenging Corrado to a duel. This caused Corrado to admit that the entire matter had been a fabrication on his part and this resulted in yet another superficial reconciliation between the two brothers. As subsequent events turned out Corrado's letter proved to be prophetic and in the final analysis may even have achieved its object in arousing Ludovico's suspicions. At any rate there may well have been a more than casual connection between the death of Francesco in 1368 and the Verona/Milan campaign of the same year.<sup>45/</sup>

The Della Scala and Bernabò certainly did pick an opportune moment; this is partly why they waited so long. In the previous year, and contrary to the wishes of Bernabò, work had been started on rebuilding the fortifications of the Serraglio, especially around the crucial area of Borgoforte. The work had been intensive but there was certainly doubt as to whether Ludovico could resist such forces unaided. He hoped that Ferrara would be able to back him up and there is a certain amount of correspondence in the Gonzaga Archive to support this.<sup>46/</sup>

Despite the fact that Ludovico did send a modest fleet of eight ships to reinforce Borgoforte the enemy armies found little real resistance

and once again the Serraglio was overrun. The all-important bridge at Borgoforte was destroyed thus laying Curtatone open to attack. The Este fleet was convincingly defeated on the 24th April in its attempt to recover lost ground at Borgoforte and with the Scaligeri troops encamped at Ostiglia communications with Ferrara were well-nigh impossible. Once again Mantua was in severe difficulties and the only glimmer of hope was that the arrival of the Emperor Charles IV could redress the balance. In fact, by the end of May his troops were very close to Mantua and the pressure was consequently relieved. <sup>47/</sup>

The resulting negotiations were fraught with difficulties and mutual suspicion. What is particularly important is Ludovico's obsession with the rebuilding of the Serraglio fortifications, a project which Bernabò opposed so violently that he organised another campaign later in the year to undo once again the work of reconstruction. <sup>48/</sup> It was clear that Milan had emerged as the most aggressive power in Northern Italy and the acquisition of Reggio by Bernabò in 1371 signalled the beginning of yet another attempt to intervene further to the south, especially in Modena and ultimately Bologna.

Any influence which Ludovico could hope to exert was neutralised by the fact that Mantua was unprotected and this meant that he could not afford to antagonise Bernabò during his campaign for Modena. The relationship with Milan was thus based primarily upon fear and this is a very significant factor. But this was also tempered by the fact that he could equally not afford actively to alienate the anti-Viscontean powers <sup>49/</sup> and it is a testament to Ludovico's cautious policies that he managed to remain aloof from any conflict for the rest of his rule. Indeed, he made it abundantly

clear on a number of occasions that he wished to remain apart from any major commitment.

It was frequently difficult to reconcile a policy of non-involvement with his frequent fears for the security of Mantua. The negotiations for a marriage between his son Francesco and Bernabò's daughter Agnese in 1380, however, showed that he appreciated the important function of marriage in going a long way towards neutralising the potential danger which would come from Milan rather than any other single source.

The peaceful succession of Francesco in 1382 sees the beginning of an uninterrupted succession from father to son and effectively ended this period of instability within the family. Ludovico could never feel totally secure and this was as much due to the means by which he eventually came to power as to anything else. As late as 1372 there was another plot to overthrow him.

Although Francesco was generally regarded as a much more attractive personality than his father <sup>50/</sup> the political situation and the means which he employed to deal with it were not really changed at all. In fact, during the period of his rule the problems of the relationship with Milan were, if anything, accentuated. Under Giangaleazzo Visconti, who seized power from Bernabò in 1385, the rapid expansion of the Milanese state exacerbated the already tense diplomatic situation in Northern Italy and finally prodded Venice to take a much more direct part in mainland politics.

It is not really surprising in the circumstances that we see a continuation of his father's policies. The experience of the incursions

into the Mantovano, and especially into the Serraglio, had taught him to place a considerable emphasis upon fortification. The castle of S. Giorgio started by Ludovico, was finished in 1406; <sup>51/</sup> Governolo was improved; but most important of all, the bridge was reconstructed at Borgoforte. This obsessive desire to ensure an adequate defensive system for the Mantovano is to be seen in his somewhat excessive demands when in 1385 two leagues were formed in order to ward off the danger from the mercenary companies. <sup>52/</sup>

Although the early years of Francesco's rule were relatively quiet ones he soon showed political opportunism and foresight in supporting Giangaleazzo rather than his father-in-law. It has been argued that a very important reason for this was a political one. Giangaleazzo, as a reward for Francesco's support, was willing to secure a release from Wenceslaus of the humiliating terms of vassalage of 1358; a request which was granted in 1383.

The relationship with Giangaleazzo was very close judging from Francesco's frequent visits to Milan and his being chosen in 1389 to accompany Valentina Visconti to France for her marriage to Louis of Valois. Moreover Giangaleazzo was very anxious to grant him a number of privileges including that of quartering the Visconti viper on his coat of arms.

From hindsight it is relatively easy to see the underlying reasons for such an affable relationship. When one considers the aims and extent of Giangaleazzo's policies it can be seen that at least for the time being it was very useful for him to secure the friendship and support of the Gonzaga in the initial stages of Milanese expansion, particularly in his elimination of the Carraresi and the Scaligeri in 1385 and 1387 respectively.



While he was establishing good relations with Milan Francesco was also careful to cultivate the friendship of Venice. In 1388, the year in which he was formally elected Captain of Mantua, he went to Venice where he was received by the Maggior Consiglio and was aggregated to the Venetian nobility.<sup>53/</sup> There was nothing ambiguous in this because even Giangaleazzo was anxious for Venetian friendship. For instance, Venice was closely involved in his policy over the division of the Carrara possessions in May 1387.<sup>54/</sup>

The measure of his support for Giangaleazzo, or rather of his nervousness with regard to him, can be seen in the way in which he disposed of his wife. In 1391 Agnese was tried and executed on a charge of adultery.<sup>55/</sup> Although this episode shows a less savoury side to Francesco's character, the political reasoning behind it is easy to understand. Agnese had very little love for the man who had deposed her father and her open pleasure at any failures by Giangaleazzo must have been extremely embarrassing and most certainly tended to compromise Francesco's position with Milan. Anyhow, she was not particularly attractive, she was sickly, and what is more, she failed to produce a male heir. Moreover, it has been argued that her personal conduct was not as innocent as some nineteenth century writers would have us believe.<sup>56/</sup>

A little over a year later, however, on September 1st 1392 Francesco joined the League of Bologna which had the moral backing of Venice and which was to oppose Giangaleazzo for the next six years. This apparently violent turnabout in Francesco's policy underlines the contention that he only supported Milan out of fear.<sup>57/</sup> By 1392 the Milanese state had expanded so much that alarm was felt by Florence and Venice which now for the first time had a common frontier with Milan and began to fear for the

security of the 'retroterra'. This is why it became Venetian policy to try to ensure the independence of the smaller states in order to cushion herself against the logical consequences of such expansion. Venice did not wish to become too actively involved but we see here the first glimmers of a new orientation which was to bring Venice eventually into the mainstream of Italian politics.

Beneath the amicable surface of Milanese/Mantuan relations at this time Francesco was feeling increasingly frustrated at the way in which he felt he was being used by Milan. Whatever such writers as Intra and Florio might suggest <sup>58/</sup> about the execution of Agnese Visconti as the result of a Viscontean plot, Francesco's motives were purely political. Once again it seemed that Giangaleazzo ignored any Mantuan requests. For instance, Francesco did not receive the three Gonzaga castles of Castel d'Ario, Canedole and Pinforte which he had hoped to receive as a reward for joining the anti-Scaligeri league of 1387. Similarly in 1391 Giangaleazzo decided to redeem a pledge by which, for payment of 50,000 ducats, he had four months previously awarded him the valuable castles of Castellaro de Lagusello, Asola, Canede and Villimpenta. It is not really surprising in the circumstances that Francesco felt that he had received precious little in tangible terms from Giangaleazzo in return for his services. Anyhow, Giangaleazzo had proved such a suspicious person that the tension involved in keeping on friendly terms with him was becoming too great to bear.

However, an examination of the detailed treaty of September shows how nervous Francesco was at the prospect of aligning himself openly against Milan. <sup>59/</sup> Once again there is an overwhelming insistence upon the allies guaranteeing the defences of Mantua and especially the bridge

at Borgoforte. Under normal circumstances such demands may well have been regarded as excessive but the fact that the allies were prepared to accede to them proves how valuable the Gonzaga alliance was to them.

War did not break out immediately. In fact there were five years of very tense peace in which Giangaleazzo, because of a realisation that he could not really afford to go to war with such a powerful league, tried his best to break it up. In fact, it would seem that the motives which inspired the League of Bologna were based upon the assumption that 'cold war' was better than open war. One of the most important members of the League, Florence, for instance, explicitly wished to avoid any major military commitment.

This made Francesco's position very difficult because now Giangaleazzo's resentment against him for his betrayal made him the prime object, and the most easily accessible one, against which a successful 'cold war' could be waged. Hence the attempts in the Spring of 1393 to divert the Mincio in order to deprive Mantua of its lake defences.<sup>60/</sup> Even such overt tactics failed to draw Florence into active opposition and Giangaleazzo was able to gain added time as protracted negotiations over this matter proceeded. In the end it was fortuitous that the technical problems which the scheme involved resulted in its being dropped for the time being.<sup>61/</sup> However, it was enough to frighten Francesco seriously, and it did not seem to bode well for the future as far as the effectiveness of his new-found allies was concerned. In fact Giangaleazzo's plan was attempted once again in 1397.<sup>62/</sup>

Throughout 1395 Giangaleazzo was trying to break up the League by exploiting its internal disagreements. He concentrated a great deal on Florence and Venice, for her part, was trying very hard to keep the allies together. Giangaleazzo's purpose behind his project for a mutually defensive league against the mercenary companies was ultimately to achieve the isolation of Mantua but the League's insistence on the maintenance of the terms of the treaty of 1392 thwarted such plans.

Giangaleazzo was finally stung into action by the treaty which the Florentines concluded with the anti-Orleanist party in France in September 1396 which, when ratified by Francesco on December 22nd promised him possession of Asola, Reggio, Mirandola and Ostiglia if they were captured.

Giangaleazzo's campaign was very fierce indeed in the Mantovano, and the fact that Milanese forces commanded by Jacopo dal Verme and Ugolotto Biancardo were immediately sent to attack Governolo and Borgoforte show just how justified Francesco's obsession with fortifications was. <sup>63/</sup>

The Milanese were devastatingly successful despite the considerable amount of help which the allies, especially Bologna, provided. After the capture of Luzzara, Suzzara and Marcaria, the Borgoforte fortifications were destroyed and the Serraglio was overrun. Although Carlo Malatesta was able temporarily to make some headway towards the end of August, the Milanese were much too strong and prospects for the future were grim. Deprived of French assistance after Nicopolis there was only one way in which this desperate situation could be alleviated and that was the decisive entry of Venice onto the scene. There was no other option in the circumstances, but the threat of Venetian intervention was enough to check Giangaleazzo.

Venice had only to show a limited military presence <sup>64/</sup> to encourage the beginning of negotiations which were to result in the truce of Pavia which was to last for ten years and which in March 1400 was transformed into a full peace treaty.

The war of 1397 had shown how very important Venice was as a political counterweight and had brought about a close friendship with Carlo Malatesta into whose family Francesco had married. Carlo was eventually to become a co-executor of his will along with the Venetian Republic. The fortifications could once again be built, but Mantua had only just managed to survive this time. Francesco did not immediately get his property back; it was held by Carlo Malatesta pending a restitution settlement. Although they were restored by the peace of 1400 Francesco had to fight hard to get them back.

It is not surprising, then, that Francesco became somewhat disillusioned with the League of Bologna and he decided after the sobering experience of this war that it would be more realistic to reach some sort of *modus vivendi* with Milan. After all the fact that Venice had shown her hand in the war was enough to make Giangaleazzo think twice before launching any more campaigns in that direction. In fact, from now on until his untimely, or fortuitous, death in 1402 Giangaleazzo was to concentrate his expansionist policies elsewhere in Tuscany and the Romagna.

From now on until his death in 1407 Francesco was to concentrate on policies which were designed not to alienate either Milan or Venice, and the fact that in the process he managed to add more territories to the Mantuan state shows just how adept he had become at the diplomatic game of

of manoeuvre and counter-manoeuve. For instance, he helped Giangaleazzo in his campaign against Bologna in July 1402. Also at the battle of Casalecchio in the same year he captured Giacomo Carrara and sent him as a prisoner to Mantua.

There can be little doubt, however, that the relationship with Giangaleazzo was still very uneasy and it was fortunate for Francesco that the former did die in September 1402 because, had he been able to carry his policies in Tuscany and the Romagna to their logical conclusion, he would have been in a better position than ever to attack Mantua once again. As it was, the Milanese state now entered a period of disintegration and Francesco could relax for the time being. <sup>65/</sup>

His final years were devoted to strengthening his already strong ties with Venice and his dealings with the Venetians not only show that he believed that close ties with Venice were essential for future policy, but they also indicate the measure of Venetian interest in the terraferma. The war of 1397 stimulated a new interest in this long neglected area. As far as Venetian interests were concerned this was a very good opportunity to experiment with a new approach to the 'retroterra'. The death of Giangaleazzo had in a sense created a power vacuum into which Venice could now step without suffering any serious military consequences. This is shown in their attitude to the elimination of the Carrara family.

This collapse of Milan encouraged a number of minor families to reassert themselves. This was especially true as regards the Carrara family who had been able to acquire Brescia, Verona and Vicenza. The Venetians were no longer prepared to tolerate this and in their direct intervention

in a campaign to crush them we see the first tangible fruits of this new policy of territorial expansion. <sup>66/</sup>

It was in Venice's interests to secure Francesco's help primarily because Mantua was such a good base for the conquest of Verona and, as far as Francesco was concerned, he felt that his support of Venice would greatly strengthen his hold upon Ostiglia, Villimpenta, Castellaro de Lagusello, Belforte and Peschiera, all of which were on the Veronese frontier, and which had been acquired some time after 1402. The retention of these territories was also to preoccupy Gianfrancesco in 1440.

The League of August 3rd 1404 with Venice included a standard condotta arrangement with Francesco. Although Francesco was to have the command of 100 infantry and 200 lances as well as the sum of 500 florins a month his actions were nevertheless closely supervised by a Venetian provveditore. Upon the successful conclusion of the war in 1406 Francesco was given possession of the frontier strongholds but it was also very clear from the agreement that the Venetian Senate was careful to insist on its own rights, especially as far as dues and tolls were concerned. <sup>67/</sup>

When Francesco died in 1407 the alliance with Venice was very strong indeed, so much so that the Doge was entrusted with the guardinaship of his young son and heir, Gianfrancesco. This was the principal diplomatic legacy which Francesco left.

IVConclusions

While it is especially dangerous to make generalisations in Italian history because the resulting picture is somewhat 'over-tidy' the general configuration of the history of Mantuan relations with the larger Italian states is relatively simple, and it would be useful to conclude this chapter by summarising the points discussed above. In the earlier part of the century the desire to counteract the dangers from the Scaligeri drove the Gonzaga into the arms of the Visconti. Whilst coming to rely increasingly upon Milan, the Gonzaga nevertheless continued to court the Scaligeri despite the great instability of the relationship. As the century progressed and as Milan's position became increasingly powerful, especially under Giangaleazzo Visconti, the Gonzaga were forced to rethink their diplomatic position to counteract the threats of absorption. It is, in a sense, the gradual realisation that Mantua was being used by both sides which generated the ambivalent policies of the future; it was a process of coming to terms with the facts of diplomatic life. It taught the Gonzaga to appreciate both the merits and dangers inherent in their strategic position. They were very conscious that they were at all times playing a very dangerous game; hence the obsession with problems of internal defence.

It was fortunate that there was no incompatibility between the pro-Milanese alliance which the Gonzaga adopted and the maintenance of trading relations with Venice during the greater part of this period. However, it must not be imagined that things always went smoothly. For instance, in 1353 there was a potentially dangerous situation created when Venice reacted



unfavourably towards the Milanese acquisition of Genoa. This was the first occasion when the Gonzaga were placed in a very difficult position of having to make a choice. <sup>68/</sup> Although Luigi Gonzaga eventually managed to avoid any exclusive commitment, possibly because Venice was not in a position to back up its threats, the incident is a foretaste of the difficulties inherent in a conflict situation between Milan and Venice. <sup>69/</sup>

However, Luigi Gonzaga's unwillingness to forego the friendship of Venice could also be explained by a growing awareness of the danger posed by a Milanese state which was gradually advancing towards his own. Relations with Milan had become much more unstable after 1348 when the Visconti became actively interested in acquiring territories in the Cremonese and Bresciano; areas in which the Gonzaga themselves possessed land..

The way in which Luchino Visconti more or less forced Mantua into war is a good illustration of the dangers posed by a heavy reliance on Milan. In 1348 Luchino was trying his best to stir up trouble between Mantua and Cremona which was urged to demand lands which had been unjustly siezed by the Gonzaga on pain of a forcible occupation by Milan. Despite desperate attempts by the Gonzaga to avoid a conflict Luchino was determined to attack Mantua itself. Mantua had no allies who could offer any real help and the war, which finally broke out in July taught the Gonzaga two things. Firstly, that in view of the unstable nature of Milanese friendship, a consistently pro-Milanese policy on the part of Mantua could bring with it the reaction of political isolation; in other words it was wise to keep one's diplomatic options open for as long as possible; and secondly, the fact that on this occasion the defences of the Serraglio resisted enemy

attacks reinforced the obsession with fortification. However, they were still lucky that Luchino died in 1349.

For the rest of the century relations with Milan were to be generally bad. When Mantua was once again threatened by Bernabò Visconti in 1357,<sup>70/</sup> the fortifications were seriously damaged and it was precisely this factor which prompted the humiliating negotiations for peace in 1358,<sup>71/</sup> and heralded a more tranquil period in relations with Milan.

However, this did not last for long and we see the same sort of events repeating themselves in the war of 1368 where the campaigns were characterised by an interaction of river and land warfare; something which was to be used so effectively in the early fifteenth century.

The position which Ludovico adopted in the war of Modena (1371-5) shows that he realised how a thoughtful diplomacy could go a long way towards saving Mantua from the destruction which had often been so near. Here we see the 'buffer state' mentality emerging. Ludovico tried to remain on good terms with both sides. While friendship, or at least non-aggression, with Bernabò was of fundamental importance for the survival of Mantua, he could not run the risk of alienating the anti-Viscontean League. His very active diplomacy in playing one side off against the other is a very significant development in the right direction.<sup>72/</sup>

The rule of Francesco Gonzaga developed the themes we have already discussed. The question of Milan, however, was now very much more serious because of the phenomenal expansion of the Milanese state under Giangaleazzo. The whole period was, in effect, a gradual modification of the state of affairs which had persisted for most of the century. Because of the very much more

serious threat posed by Milan, there was a consequent reaction from other states, primarily Florence and subsequently Venice. The greater need for protection was to drive Francesco more and more towards Venice but by now he had learned not to become too closely attached to any one state. He appreciated the need for diversifying diplomatic links on a more extensive scale than hitherto<sup>73/</sup>, because he realised that he could never implicitly trust any one state.<sup>74/</sup>

The part played by Mantua in the war against Milan in 1397 shows the dangers which a buffer state could face. The fact that Mantua was regarded as a significant obstacle to his progress eastwards was clearly indicated by Giangaleazzo's sometimes frenetic tactics.<sup>75/</sup> In a sense this campaign pointed very much to the future because the same situation could, and indeed did, operate the other way round with Venetian westward expansion later on.

However, the success of Mantua's resistance could also be regarded as a decisive blow for Mantuan independence:

"Per il minuscolo stato gonzaghese era un bel passo innanzi ed era una notevole affermazione di prestigio."<sup>76/</sup>

Although it was fortunate for Mantua and Florence that Giangaleazzo died unexpectedly in 1402, and that this brought about a temporary collapse of Milanese power, the campaign had a more sinister side to it because this war, perhaps more than any other single event, was to make the Venetians alarmingly aware of the need to adopt a more consistent terraferma policy and this was ultimately to have baleful consequences for Mantua yet again.

What, then, *was* the legacy of the trecento?

Basically, we have seen it as the science of survival. This meant the organisation of defences and a continuous assessment of the political state of play among other powers, both great and small. The lessons were taken to heart. Against the background of the development of the Milanese state and the repeated attempts by the Scaligeri to reassert themselves, the Gonzaga had learnt the art of constant vigilance; that the game of politics possessed its own peculiar brand of morality, a morality ultimately to be enshrined in Machiavelli's "Prince". In addition to this they had appreciated that it was essential to remain on good terms with Venice and as many smaller states as possible in order to compensate, in part, for any escalation in relationships with Milan.

However, the trecento in a sense presented a less complex set of alternatives to the Gonzaga than in the succeeding century. For the greater part of the century the main danger came from *one* direction - Milan. The fact that Mantua managed to survive is a great tribute to the skill of the Gonzaga and bears out the proposition that they had learned how to make the best out of a sometimes very difficult and dangerous situation. It also shows the disadvantages as well as the advantages of the position which nature and Gonzaga ingenuity had created for Mantua. Whether it liked it or not, Mantua was to be deeply involved in any repercussions resulting from even the slightest change in the balance of power between Lombardy and the Veneto. It had become a significant wedge driven between Milan and Venice.

The situation was temporarily eased with the uncertain period after the death of Giangaleazzo Visconti but when the spectre of Milanese

imperialism was to raise its head once again, this time under the auspices of Filippo Maria in the 1420's it was to be in very different circumstances. It was this phenomenon, combined with a much more dynamic and possessive Venetian attitude towards its mainland territories in Italy which was once again to drag Mantua into the power game of Northern Italy; but this time the game was much more dangerous, and the stakes were much higher. <sup>77/</sup>

It was just as well that the Gonzaga had some experience in dealing with such similar situations in the fourteenth century because now Gonzaga expertise and flexibility were to be tested to the full in order to prevent Mantua from being submerged once and for all. This is why the rule of Gianfrancesco occupies such a crucial period in the history of Mantua when it becomes the focal point of Milanese and Venetian policies.

CHAPTER 1.THE POLITICAL LEGACY OF THE TRECENTONotes

1. See Luzio, L'Archivio Gonzaga di Mantova, cit. p.225.
2. A fuller discussion of this phenomenon is to be found in E.Bevilaqua. Informazione sugli argini, sgoli e adeguamenti dello stato Mantovano, (Mantua 1866).
3. The scheme seems to have been carried out in two stages:
  - i. 1230 directed by the communal architect Alberto Pitentino.
  - ii. 1259 the formation of the Lago di Paiole and the Chiusa di Governolo.

There is a very full discussion of this in chapter X of G.Lodi, Mantova e le guerre memorabili nelle valle del Po. (Mantua 1877). See also Waller, op.cit., pp.6-8.
4. The completion of the Serraglio from Borgoforte to Curtatone, which involved developing the natural (if somewhat weak) defence provided by the Osone by digging trenches and building fortifications, was apparently the idea of Sordello Visconti. See M. Villani "Historia Universale", R.I.S. vol. XIV cap. xcvi col.461.
5. Platina, p.213.
6. For a history of the Gonzaga family from the earliest times see A Luzio, "I Corradi di Gonzaga", A.S.L. XI. 1913. A useful summary exists in Waller, op.cit. pp.11-14.
7. Luzio, "I Corradi..." cit. pp.249-253. One of the more reliable early studies of the genealogy of the Gonzaga family was the seventeenth century work by Jacopo Daino De Origine et Genealogia Illustrissime Domus Dominorum de Gonzaga, the original of which is in Arch. Gon. B.416.
8. They seem to have been subsequently employed on other missions of a diplomatic nature; for instance, in 1207, in connection with the alliance between Mantua and Azzone d'Este and the Count of S.Bonifacio in Verona. In 1217 Corrado was also involved with peace negotiations in Verona.
9. However, this may not present a totally reliable picture because four years previously, on 2 December 1264 they had been expelled from Mantua owing to a territorial dispute between Mantua and nearby Reggio. See Coniglio, op.cit., p.323.
10. Namely in 1292, 1313, 1340, 1364, 1370, and 1392. The most complete document is the investiture of 1340 in Arch. Gon. B. 237. The territories cited are quite extensive and certainly form the nucleus of the family's landed wealth. Luzio (op.cit. p.273) refers to it as "quella ingente sostanza che costituì il fattore precipuo del loro avvento alla signoria".

11. See Arch. Gon. B. 238 (30 Dec.1263).
12. See Luzio, op.cit., p.273 and Arch. Gon. B.14 for documentary evidence of these possessions.
13. This is argued by Waller, op.cit., p.13.
14. These were marriages between Elisabetta Gonzaga and Rudolph of Habsburg (Arch. Gon. B. 215) and Filippino Gonzaga to Werena of Habsburg (Arch. Gon. B.196). See also Luzio op.cit., pp.278ff.. The relevant documents are published in the appendix to this article. Incidentally, there was at this time an unsuccessful attempt by Guido Gonzaga to get Venice to engage the military services of the Habsburg family. On the 8 May 1354 the Doge replied: "... sed cum iam ordinem dederimus prelibatis nobilibus viris quaerentibus nostra stipendia quod veniant cum furnimentis suis, ita quod venientibus eis ut speramus nedum habebimus necessarium talie nostre....." (Arch. Gon. B.1418).
15. Apparently this third marriage in February 1340 was celebrated simultaneously with that of a son and a grandson; but what is perhaps more important is the list of important guests cited by Aliprandi (op.cit.pp.131ff.) which included among many others Mastino della Scala, Luchino Visconti, Giacomo da Carrara and Obizzo d'Este, which is yet another indication of the personal prestige which Luigi enjoyed.
16. See Amadei Cronaca Universale di Mantova (Mantua 1955), vol.1.pp.494ff. See also Coniglio, op.cit., vol.1, p.321.
17. There had already been an unsuccessful attempt by the Della Scala to enter Mantua after the War of Modena in 1325. See H. Spangenberg, Cangrande I della Scala (Berlin 1892), pp.59ff..
18. Carlo d'Arco in his Studi intorno al municipio di Mantova (Mantua 1872) vol. iv. p.6 implies that Luigi was "sedotto dai figli e del b. Scaligero".
19. On 19 January 1338 Luigi managed to get from Lewis of Bavaria the vicariates of Reggio, Piadena, Casalmaggiore, Asola together with the recognition of his appropriation of the Bonacolsi property.
20. It seems clear that Francesco only really wanted a marquisate and was not really interested in any other title. In 1393 Boniface IX erected the Gonzaga 'feudo' into a 'contea' (Arch. Gon. B.85) but there is no evidence that he ever used the title of 'Conte di Gonzaga'. There is a good discussion of fourteenth century relations with the Emperor. in Waller, op.cit.,pp.210-259.
21. This was summed up very succinctly by B.Pullan, in History of Early Renaissance Italy, (London, 1973), p.234: "Their role (the Emperors) was not to oust and depose, but to confirm and acquiesce - in return for substantial cash payments." The Gonzaga in particular were interested in the acquisition of lands which had belonged to the Bonacolsi.
22. For more details see Coniglio, op.cit., pp.346-7.
23. There was quite a considerable supply of grain to Venice in return for salt. Anyhow, Venetian salt was almost an object of diplomacy in itself.

24. See especially Vol.1. ch.2 of Coniglio, op.cit., pp.321-411.
25. He was sent to help Lewis of Hungary in Naples and Bernabò Visconti in Tuscany. (See Waller, op.cit., p.15).
26. For a detailed consideration of this see Torelli "Capitanato del Popolo e Vicariato Imperiale come Elementi Costituivi della Signoria Bonacolsiana", R.A.V.M. 1923 Even though the formalities of election to the office of Captain General was preserved up to 1407 there was never any opposition. The creation of the Marquisate in 1432 made this practice redundant.
27. See A. Luzio, Documenti per la storia delle relazioni diplomatici Verona e Mantova (Milan 1901), Vol.2.pp.264-7.
28. This is borne out by the fact that no long before this on 29 April Lewis of Bavaria had invested Cangrande della Scala with all the rights and property possessed by the Bonacolsi in Mantua. The text of the document is published by Winckelmann in Acta Imperii, vol.2, p.315.
29. The state included Bassano, Feltre, Conegliano, Belluno, Verona, Vicenza, as well as Brescia, Reggio, Padova, Parma and even Lucca in Tuscany.
30. Luzio Documenti... cit., vol.2, pp.448-50.
31. See Luzio, 'I Corradi di Gonzaga', document XV in the appendix.
32. There is a detailed examination of the background to hostilities in L.Simeoni, "Le origini del conflitto Veneto-Fiorentino-Scaligiere 1336-9", Atti e Mem. della R.Accad. delle Scienze di Bologna, 1930.
33. See Luzio, Documenti, cit. vol.2, p.296 & ff.. The precise words used are 'destructionem' and 'consumationem'.
34. See Coniglio, op.cit., p.336. Azzo Visconti, Obizzo d'Este and Guido Gonzaga agreed on the following details: they would together be responsible for the mobilisation of 4,000 light cavalry, 1,000 infantry, 300 'guastatori', 6 'ingegneri' and 36 carpenters. In addition to these numbers it was decided that there should be 200 cartloads of victuals and other supplies and that 100 of them was to be supplied by Mantua. The Este, Visconti and the Gonzaga were together to provide a third of the total cost of the army.
35. In a lengthy memorandum which the Gonzaga sent to Pope Clement VI in August 1345 in reply to his attempts to bring about a peaceful settlement, it was maintained that despite the Gonzaga's genuine desire for peace, the Scaligieri had always resorted to unjustified aggression. Luzio, Documenti, cit., vol.2, pp.441ff.
36. Waller, op.cit., p.23.
37. He was to command a force of 200 men. Pisa occupied Lucca but peace was concluded in October 1342.
38. The main areas of contention were to be (i) in the Bresciano; Castel Goffredo, Castiglione delle Stiviere and Asola; and (ii) in the Cremonese; Casalmaggiore, Piadena and Pomponesco.



39. Cronaca, cit.,p.132.
40. His two trips to Italy were in 1354-5 and 1368-9. Among other aims, he wanted to smooth the way for the return of the Pope to Rome.
41. Arch. Gon. B.37. There is a very detailed documentation here.
42. See Aliprandi, p.134.
43. Platina, p.749.
44. Cronaca, cit, p.141. Compare this account to R Ramboldi, "una macchinazione di Cansignorio della Scala a danno dei Gonzaga", Rendiconti de Reale Istituto Lombardo(1897). This article also covers Corrado's plot against Ludovico in 1370.
45. Another son from the second marriage who proved to be difficult was Federico whose jealousy was aroused by the revocation of a donation in his favour due to his stepbrother. This led to his part in the plot against Ludovico in 1376. See Waller, p.16.
46. Arch. Gon.B.1180.
47. This is discussed more fully in G. Pirchain, "Italian und Kaiser Karl IV in der zeit seiner Zweiten Romfahrt", Quellen und Forschungen aus dem Geibeite Geschichte (1930).
48. 300 prisoners were taken as a result of this and the area around the bridge at Borgoforte was sacked.
49. The diplomacy concerning this is much too complex to be considered here. For a detailed study see J. Glénisson, "La politique de Louis de Gonzague, seigneur de Mantoue, pendant la guerre entre Gregoire XI et Bernabò Visconti (1371-1375)", Bibl. de l'École des Chartes, CIX (1951)
50. Eg. Aliprandi, p.149.
51. Luzio, 'I Corradi....',cit, appendix p.179 (documentation).
52. Those involved were the Gonzaga, Giangaleazzo Visconti, the Este and the Carraresi. See Waller, op.cit.,p.168.
53. See F. Tonelli, Richerche storiche di Mantova (Mantua 1707), p.234.
54. Venice was to have Treviso while Milan was to have Padua, Feltre and Belluno.
55. For a full account of this see L.Cibrario, "Degli amori e della morte di Agnese Visconti moglie di Francesco Gonzaga", Opuscoli storici e letterarii editi ed inediti, (1835).
56. Waller, op.cit.,p.178.
57. Francesco says as much in a memorandum to Wenceslaus, a copy of which is in Arch. Gon. B.111, dated 1395.

58. G.B.Intra, Agnese Visconti, racconto storico, (Milan,1898) and G.Fiorio, Agnese Visconti, Tragedia, (Milan 1829). According to these writers Francesco broke with Giangaleazzo because he discovered that Agnese had been 'framed'. There are even suggestions that incriminating letters were planted where Francesco would be sure to find them.
59. In fact it was by no means certain to the allies that Giangaleazzo would not be able to convince Francesco to break with the League.
60. See B.Corio, Storia di Milano, (Milan 1856), vol.2,p.371. A dyke was constructed at Valeggio and a new channel was dug to divert the Mincio into the Adige by way of Villafranca.
61. D.M.Bueno de Mesquita, Giangaleazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan (1351-1402): a study in the political career of an Italian despot (Cambridge,1941), pp.165-166. There is here an excellent detailed account of the relations between Francesco and Giangaleazzo drawn in large part from Mantuan sources.
62. For a discussion of this particular attempt see Lodi,op.cit.,pp.130ff.
63. See L.Frati, "La Guerra di Giangaleazzo Visconti contro Mantova nel 1397", A.S.L. IV.1887. This gives a very sound account of this crucial year.
64. Venice's formal adherence to the League of Bologna was to last until the League itself expired on 10 April 1402. Venice's contribution was to be 20% of the total war effort. A squadron of Venetian galleys was sent up the Po to Ostiglia and Governolo.
65. On December 13 1402 he concluded a perpetual league of non-aggression and mutual defence with Giangaleazzo's widow Caterina Visconti. Francesco continued to be of use to the Milanese state. In July 1403 he was entrusted with powers to negotiate the Peace of Caledio with the Pope and was made responsible for taking charge of Visconti citadels in Bologna.
66. See I. Raulich, La Caduta dei Carraresi (Padua 1894). This shows in considerable detail the relationship between the Venetians and the Gonzaga and indicates that Francesco regarded Venice as his 'Nuovo astro protettore'.
67. See S.S. reg. 3, fol.44.
68. Venice was attempting to encourage active opposition from Ferrara, Mantua, Padua, Faenza and the future Emperor Charles IV, King of Bohemia.
69. Giovanni Visconti was most anxious to avoid any open conflict with Venice and sent Petrarch on an embassy to Doge Andrea Dandolo.
70. See Coniglio, op.cit.,p.374.
71. An important pre-requisite put forward by Bernabò was that the Serraglio defences should never be rebuilt - a clear indication of their importance.
72. See Glénisson, op.cit.,pp.232-86.

73. Francesco's trip to France with Valentina Visconti, an act which in itself was to have baleful consequences for Italy a century later, does show a desire to widen Gonzaga spheres of influence.
74. Waller, op.cit.,p.20 says: "Florence and Venice only supported the leagues as long as their own interests were threatened, and this did not require the elimination of the enemy." As far as Mantua was concerned, the Emperor was the most disappointing.
75. See Frati, op.cit.,pp.241-277.
76. Coniglio, op.cit.,p.422.
77. On the significance of this campaign for Venetian attitudes see Frati, op.cit., p.253, and also Verci, Storia della Marca Trivigiana (Venice,1965), XVII, p.97.

CHAPTER 2

THE EARLY YEARS 1407-1420

CHAPTER 2THE EARLY YEARS 1407-1420IGianfrancesco's Succession

"Amaraval Forte lo popol mantovano  
Perché ben zovenetto li paria..." 1/

It is with these words that the chronicler Aliprandi announces the succession of Gianfrancesco Gonzaga to the *signoria* of Mantua on the 7th of March 1407. The reference to Gianfrancesco's youth is by no means without significance because this was the first time since the Gonzaga had seized power that the problems of a minority had to be faced. The *trecento* may very well have established Gonzaga rule in Mantua as the norm, but this was the first time that the succession was to be put to a severe test. In many ways this was an exceedingly delicate moment and, as we shall see, it had to be handled with extreme care and tact. It did not require very much political perception to appreciate not only the pressures which a minority could generate within Mantua itself, but also the problems which this could cause *vis-a-vis* other states and smaller *signorie*. The political situation in Northern Italy was so fluid that it was only by continually projecting a strong and stable image that a state like Mantua could hope to avoid being submerged. There were always people like Ottobuono Terzi of Parma who were waiting to pounce on even the smallest indication of weakness to try and strengthen their territory at the expense of a less powerful neighbour.

We have already seen how the central geographical position of Mantua affected Gonzaga policies in the fourteenth century and we must

now pause to consider the nature of the political situation in Northern Italy at the time of Francesco Gonzaga's death in order to estimate how such a situation could affect Mantua at such a delicate and crucial moment. It is certainly clear that, faced with the untimely death of such a strong personality as Francesco, such matters were of paramount importance to those who had the responsibility of ensuring continuity of power and policies.

Alarming though the death of Francesco was for Mantua, there was one mitigating factor as far as the political picture was concerned. Relatively speaking, his death occurred at a quiescent moment in the history of Northern Italy. As far as Lombardy and the Veneto were concerned the keynote here was construction rather than confrontation. Although this period provided the genesis of future conflict in the larger spectrum of Lombard affairs, and, indeed, of the situation which was to occupy Gianfrancesco for the better part of his life, there was in 1407 no serious threat to Mantua from outside. On the other hand, however, this did not mean that external matters could be ignored. Experience had taught that a careful monitoring of the actions and attitudes of the larger states was essential. Indeed, it will be proved that vigilance in this field was largely responsible for the success of the arrangements made by Francesco for the smooth transfer of power to his son.

The starting point for any such survey must inevitably be Milan, the source of the chain reaction which was ultimately to bring about a conflict situation. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the main threat to Mantua in the later fourteenth century had come from Milan; but now the Milanese state itself was passing through a period of crisis and this in itself was to point a lesson which could not be ignored by contemporaries. The state which had been built up so carefully and ruthlessly by Giangaleazzo

Visconti collapsed on his death in 1402. Apart from the obvious difficulties resulting from the amorphous character of his state, problems which surely would have confronted even Giangaleazzo himself had he lived longer, the real source of the crisis lay in the fact that his two legitimate sons were minors. <sup>2/</sup> Although the parallel situation in Mantua in 1407 was rather different in that the extent of the territories involved was much smaller, it did however, provide a stark picture of what at all costs was to be avoided. Once the strong personality of Giangaleazzo had been removed from the scene, rivalries both within the Milanese state and within the Council of Regency itself could be given a much freer rein. <sup>3/</sup>

It is interesting to note how important the figure of Francesco Gonzaga himself was in Milanese affairs around the time of Giangaleazzo's death and in the period immediately after it. He was, in fact, named in the Secret Ducal Council of Seventeen and was also mentioned in a codicil to Giangaleazzo's will of the 25th August 1402 as one of the tutors and defenders of his children. <sup>4/</sup> It seemed that, despite the basic instability in the relationship between Francesco and Giangaleazzo, which we have already discussed, Francesco, along with Pandolfo and Carlo Malatesta, enjoyed a high reputation in Milan. Of course, this bore rich fruit as far as Mantua was concerned. It is surely significant to note that on the map of Milanese possessions in 1402 Mantua was the only state left intact. Its geographical position as a buffer state is possibly at its most obvious to date here. Indeed, it becomes increasingly clear just how skillful Francesco was, not only in the field of diplomacy, but also in the tricky sphere of contingency planning. Even though his death was unexpected, it is clear that he wished to bequeath to Gianfrancesco in some way something of the experience which he had gained in his dealings with Milan; and this he was to do eminently well in his choice of Carlo Malatesta as one of his son's tutors.

Those faced with the job of holding the Milanese state together in 1402, then, were confronted with an impossible task. The admittedly ephemeral unity of the Milanese state was quickly dissolved when the ambitions of the various military commanders came into play. Whatever dubious unity had been imposed by Giangaleazzo was now replaced by something infinitely more dangerous.

This is not the place to go into any great detail concerning the many shifts of emphasis which took place during these years. Generally speaking there were two opposing groups of condottieri; the so-called Guelfs were led by Pandolfo Malatesta <sup>5/</sup> and the 'Ghibellines' were led by Jacino Cane. <sup>6/</sup> The former group comprised the heirs of Bernabò Visconti who were to take a prominent part in these troubled years. Such alignments were in reality only a front for personal ambitions; the aim was the total dismemberment of the Duchy. This disintegrating process spread outwards from Milan to other centres such as Brescia, Pavia and the Valcamonica, where resentment against the Visconti, long suppressed, broke into open rebellion.

Although the Duchess Caterina tried desperately to bring about a peaceful solution by trying to get the French to intervene, the situation was in effect exacerbated by the resentment which was felt by Montferrat, Savoy and especially Florence, which was very active in trying to get the involvement of Venice against Milan. Any sense of continuity in the government of Milan was hampered by the widespread resentment which was felt against the Barbavara. <sup>7/</sup>

It was not surprising that on all sides we see a shrinkage of the territory which was effectively ruled by the Visconti at the expense



of the condottieri, especially in Umbria and the Romagna. The Carrara family were able to dominate in Padua and Verona, and Facino Cane was able to build for himself a personal state in Valsesia. <sup>8/</sup> The net result was that by the end of 1404 Milanese territory had been restricted only to Lombardy itself, and even that was at the mercy of Pandolfo Malatesta and Facino Cane, the latter perhaps being the more ambitious of the two. <sup>9/</sup>

The only solution for Giovanni Maria Visconti was to engage the services of a soldier who was powerful enough to combat Facino Cane effectively. That person was to be Jacopo dal Verme who was appointed in February 1406. Very closely associated with him in his attempts to restore some order to the Milanese state was Carlo Malatesta who was called back to Milan. Carlo was very highly thought of; not only was he a soldier of some reput~~e~~, but he was also a very able politician, and had been closely associated with Francesco Gonzaga in the attempts to bring about peace. <sup>10/</sup> The attempts of Carlo to ensure a stable government in Milan are worthy of the highest praise. <sup>11/</sup>

On the 22nd of February 1407 the decisive battle of Binasco was fought against Facino Cane against whom dal Verme was able to unite a force consisting of Francesco Gonzaga, Otto Terzi, Cabrino Fondulo, Pandolfo Malatesta (won over by his brother) and also, significantly, a detachment of Venetian troops. Cane, defeated by superior numbers, was forced to flee to Alessandria.

Although this could be argued to be the starting point for a rehabilitation of Milanese fortunes it is clear that the Visconti in 1407 would not pose any serious threat to Mantua, at least for the time being. The five years since the death of Giangaleazzo had shown that although

Milan itself would not prove troublesome to Mantua, the consequences of the disintegration indeed could. This may well have been partly the reasoning behind Francesco's attempts to prevent the situation from escalating still further. After all, Giangaleazzo's state had almost totally surrounded Mantua and any modifications in the political picture would of necessity be of the utmost importance. This was amply borne out by Francesco's attitude towards the Carrara family. However, the most positive thing to emerge from Francesco's experience with Milan in the last five years of his life was surely his choice of Carlo Malatesta, a man of proven ability in an allied situation, to guide the fortunes of his state after his death; and this is something which will be considered in due course.

Francesco Gonzaga's help in the eventual downfall of the Carrara family also ensured that in 1407 Venice would be favourable to Mantua. The position of Venice has already been discussed elsewhere;<sup>12/</sup> but the position which Francesco was to adopt *vis-a-vis* Milan and Venice shows how adept he in fact was at contingency planning. The weakness of Milan was responsible for the development of Carrara fortunes which in turn alarmed Venice which was already beginning to take a much more active part and interest in the mainland, even though Venetian attitudes to the *terraferma* was to change more radically after the acquisition of Friuli in 1421. The first stages were admittedly tentative and defensive but it soon became very clear that it was very valuable for Venice to preserve the independence of a number of smaller satellite states in order to cushion herself against the possibility of a revival of Milanese power. This, coupled with the fact that Venice was definitely the most dynamic state in Northern Italy at that time resulted in a virtual identity of interest between Venice and Mantua.

As we shall see, both sides would potentially gain from Francesco's appointment of the Doge as joint tutor along with Carlo Malatesta. In 1407, then, Venice was in a very favourable position as far as Mantua was concerned.

All in all, then, as far as the larger states were concerned, political circumstances in Northern Italy gave no trouble to the new regime in Mantua and this was due as much to the expertise and foresight of Francesco Gonzaga as it was to the diplomatic situation itself.

As far as the rest of Italy was concerned there was very little or nothing to worry about. Florence was too concerned about eradicating Viscontean influence in Tuscany to be over-concerned about Mantua, and the Papacy, divided by the Great Schism, was too concerned with its own internal difficulties. The only possible problem could have been the ambitions of Ladislas of Naples whose policies, facilitated by the weaknesses of the Papacy, took him as far north as Rimini and Siena. <sup>13/</sup> Florence was organising a league against him in 1410 which involved Carlo's brother Malatesta Malatesta. Gianfrancesco was to involve himself in Romagnol affairs when he fought on the side of John XXIII at Bologna in 1413. Indeed, he was to play host both to John and Martin V. However, such matters were of peripheral interest to Mantua itself: the involvement in Bologna was useful experience for a young soldier following in his father's footsteps and the presence of Martin V could be interpreted in terms of prestige rather than any firm sense of political commitment. Nevertheless Gianfrancesco was to be continually interested in the affairs of the Romagna in so far as they concerned his wife's family.

As far as the immediate future was concerned, the situation presented no problems provided the transfer of power was reasonably smooth. This last condition was a very important one because the diplomatic situation could never be relied upon to continue unchanged. Milan was on the brink of a political comeback and, confronted by a new orientation of Venice, a reasonably safe situation could so easily turn dangerous. If anything, the situation required even more vigilance from Mantua and in addition to this it was very necessary to keep both Venice and Milan happy by trying to preserve the *status quo*. Such a state of affairs demanded, at least for the time being, a broad continuity with the past, and especially the immediate past.

Much, then, depended upon the situation within Mantua at the death of Francesco. When Francesco assumed power in 1382 at the age of only 18, it was assumed that his rule would be a long one. His sudden death in 1407 came as a great shock; the illness which struck him down was very short. What tended to make the situation more alarming than ever was the fact that his second wife Margherita Malatesta had pre-deceased him by some eight years, <sup>14/</sup> thus leaving Gianfrancesco an orphan. It was, then, a doubly difficult position and would be a severe test of Gonzaga rule. It must be remembered that although the Gonzaga had been in power for seventy years, an unchallenged succession from father to son was by no means inevitable, especially when the realities of the immediate situation looked so disconcerting.

It is not always easy to gauge the nature of public opinion, but there is much to indicate that Francesco's rule had been popular and, indeed, successful as far as Mantua was concerned. His name was closely bound up with the whole business of Mantua's sense of corporate identity, something

eminently proved by the events of 1397. He had always appreciated the importance of fortifications.<sup>15/</sup> Indeed, there is no documentary evidence to indicate that there was any resentment against him in Mantua. The acquisition of lands in the Veronese had rounded off the Mantuan state. He had taken a great deal of interest in the religious life of the city lending his patronage to a programme of new building and re-furbishing, something which was to be continued by Gianfrancesco and his wife.<sup>16/</sup>

Francesco had also taken an interest in organising the internal administration of the city and was particularly concerned with regulating the form of the Consiglio Maggiore, something which had not officially been done before.<sup>17/</sup> He had also shown an important concern in supervising the economic life of Mantua; something which is shown in his regulation of the Università dei Mercanti<sup>18/</sup> and the Arte della Lana,<sup>19/</sup> in both cases tightening his control over them.

Francesco had made many positive achievements, but perhaps his major aim was to obtain from the Emperor the title of Marquis; and this, along with all the other factors we have mentioned, marks a strong element of continuity with Gianfrancesco. Imperial recognition was, in effect, a double-edged advantage. Not only did it underline the legitimacy of Gonzaga rule in Mantua, and in particular the question of the hereditary succession,<sup>20/</sup> but it also gave added lustre to the standing of Mantua as a state. It would most certainly have improved Francesco's standing in relation to either Milan or Venice. It was a great disappointment that the negotiations broke down over the eternal question of cash in 1383; but Francesco did not give up and negotiations were subsequently reopened with Sigismund, Wenceslaus's successor who seemed favourably disposed towards Mantua. The whole question

was not finally resolved until 1432, but Francesco's attempts<sup>21/</sup> show an intense concern not only for the standing of his own family, but also for the stability of the Mantuan state.

To sum up so far - it would appear, on the surface at least, that in 1407 Gonzaga rule enjoyed popular support in that it had become intimately bound up with both internal and external security and this, together with the relatively quiescent political situation generally, would tend to ease a smooth transfer of power. This would almost certainly have been the case had Gianfrancesco been old enough to rule in his own right. However, the fact that he was twelve years old and an orphan, and that there was also a negative side to the obvious political advantages which followed the breakup of the Milanese state, obviously generated considerable anxiety. Clearly everything depended on the quality of the arrangements made by Francesco and the efficiency of their execution. It was indeed fortunate that on his deathbed Francesco was clearheaded enough to foresee the difficulties which could lie in the way of his son's succession; and it is to the arrangements which he made to offset these that we must now turn.

## II

### The Arrangements for the Regency

Some three years before his death Francesco had reformed the Statutes of Mantua which more or less guaranteed the security of the succession of his family.<sup>22/</sup> His sudden death, however, meant that there was a hiatus or uncertain period which could prove very dangerous and very fruitful for possible opponents, if they were given time to act. Carlo Malatesta was in Milan when news reached him of Francesco's death and even though he hastened

with all speed to Mantua to take up his duties, much hinged upon the quality of Gonzaga support in Mantua initially. The Council of the city was very important in this dangerous period because it still had the right to elect Gianfrancesco as 'capitano' <sup>23/</sup> and however amenable it may have been to Francesco there was naturally bound to be a division of opinion over the feasibility of appointing one so young. Gianfrancesco was aged between eleven and twelve years old at the time and it would be at least two or three years before he would officially be able to assume any real influence in the affairs of the city. <sup>24/</sup> In political terms this was quite a long time and the question of security would inevitably be raised. In view of the contemporary situation in Milan, anxiety over the possible attitudes of neighbouring states such as Parma, coupled with memories of the recent past, such anxiety can only have been reinforced. Unfortunately, documentary material for this period is not very plentiful because of a fire which occurred in the Palazzo Vecchio a few years later. <sup>25/</sup> However, much can be deduced from other sources for this period provided they are viewed in a critical light. <sup>26/</sup>

While it is not possible to document clearly the discussions which took place in the council it is nevertheless fairly easy to deduce the immediate issues at stake. Apart from the discussions over the feasibility of Gianfrancesco's succession they would have to consider whether a return to a commune would be possible or desirable, whether any other family from within Mantua could assume power, and finally, failing the latter two, the validity of the arrangements bequeathed by Francesco to deal with a minority.

There does appear to have been a certain amount of opinion within the council which doubted the logic of entrusting Mantua to a minor. <sup>27/</sup>

The whole notion of a minority could never really be popular but the question in everyone's mind was what alternative existed which was compatible with the interests of Mantua? Did the opposition have any viable alternative? Because of the very fact that Gonzaga rule had never really been seriously questioned up until this moment no coherent body of opinion had managed to form itself within the council. This was especially the case given the sudden death of Francesco.

As we have seen, the spirit of the commune in Mantua was long dead and even if there had been a flicker of Republicanism it would have appeared somewhat antiquated at a time when the trend was towards the consolidation of princely power. Any such notion would be seen by outsiders as a weakness and thereby seriously jeopardise Mantuan security, the very thing which was uppermost in everyone's mind.

Similarly there was no one else who had sufficient influence within Mantua to step effectively into Gonzaga shoes. The very success of Gonzaga rule over the past seventy years together with the fact that the Gonzaga had ensured that the situation which had brought them to power would not be repeated suggested that such a solution would inevitably bring about an inner conflict which again would present the wrong political image. Such a move would surely nullify the positive achievements of the recent past.

It seemed, then, that the odds were in favour of sticking to a course which had proved successful in the past. The opposition did not really have time to organise itself and, moreover, those in favour of preserving the Gonzaga succession had a powerful and persuasive spokesman in Donato de' Preti, who was largely responsible for persuading the council to



adopt the measures suggested by Francesco. Donato was a highly respected man of affairs; in particular he had had a considerable amount of experience in judicial matters, being a "legium doctor de collegio iudicium",<sup>28/</sup> and his opinions were likely to carry a great deal of weight. Indeed, he was to figure on a number of occasions in the early years of Gianfrancesco's rule in a diplomatic capacity. His speech, reported by most of the chronicle sources consisted of a staunch defence of the advantages of hereditary succession.<sup>29/</sup> Few needed reminding of the advantages which had accrued from Gonzaga rule in the past. In addition to this he was able to convince the council of the feasibility of the plan of entrusting the tutorship of Gianfrancesco jointly to Carlo Malatesta and the Republic of Venice.<sup>30/</sup> However, it is also significant that the formal election of Gianfrancesco as the fifth 'capitano' of Mantua only took place on the 20th March 1407,<sup>31/</sup> and the thirteen day interval serves to give some indication of just how much discussion over the question of the succession there was.

There was, then, no real alternative to the continuance of Gonzaga rule. At a time when there was simply no margin for governmental error there was more to be said for a continuation of the *status quo* even in the person of a young boy than in trusting to untried alternatives. In many respects the only salvation lay in broad continuity. If other cities had suffered under their 'tyrants', this was not true of Mantua. By the beginning of the fifteenth century the Gonzaga had so successfully woven their personality into the fabric of government that there resulted an identity of purpose which tended ultimately to suffocate any opposition. In a very real sense Gianfrancesco became almost a symbol of the Gonzaga hereditary succession and his public acclamation on the 20th March virtually amounted to the biggest ever vote of confidence in it.

However, we must beware of reading too much into this as far as practical matters were concerned. In the hard, back-biting world of politics there was no room for sentiment and consequently supreme importance must be attached to the acceptability of Francesco's choice of tutors to guide Mantuan affairs during his son's minority.

The fairly unusual measure of entrusting the guardianship of Gianfrancesco jointly to Venice and Carlo Malatesta shows at one and the same time Francesco's perceptive reading of the contemporary political situation and also postulated a sound solution to any possible conflict which might arise between Venice and Milan in the near future. In other words, it encapsulated his own political experience. Francesco, in effect, could not have chosen a better pair of tutors for his son because each partner furnished unique qualities which, when combined, would make for the greatest possible security for Mantua in the circumstances. Let us now examine the positive qualities which each tutor was to bring to the task in hand.

The choice of Carlo Malatesta was extremely popular with the Consiglio Maggiore. The first, and the most obvious advantage, was his close relationship with the Gonzaga family. This was something of the utmost importance given Gianfrancesco's age. Of primary importance was the provision of a stable emotional background for the boy; and this was most evidently supplied by Carlo's wife Elisabetta who was, in effect, Gianfrancesco's natural aunt, just as Carlo was his natural uncle.<sup>32/</sup> The family ties were the closest possible and this, in great part, would make up for the emotional vacuum caused by the death of Gianfrancesco's parents. Indeed, the influence of Elisabetta on Gianfrancesco was much greater than some writers have cared to acknowledge. Having no children of her own she virtually adopted Gianfrancesco as her own son.

In addition to this the relationship between Carlo and Francesco had been very close indeed. As we have seen, they had both been involved in Milanese affairs after Giangaleazzo's death and Francesco consequently had the greatest possible confidence in Carlo's abilities. Indeed, the chroniclers generally had a very high opinion of Carlo at the time, even though his popularity with the Mantuans seemed subsequently to undergo a decline. Not only was Carlo a fine soldier, a very positive quality in the circumstances, but his reputation in Mantua and in Northern Italy in general as a diplomat was very impressive. His achievements in reorganising the Milanese administration and his attempts at a policy of appeasement were most noteworthy. It was with considerable justification that Poggio Bracciolini could say of him "fuit Carolus vir, tum belli, tum pacis artibus egregius". <sup>33/</sup> Here was a man who could be universally respected, not only for his military prowess, but also for his achievements in the arts of peace, and this was the ideal balance for the job which he had to carry out. In addition to this it was very difficult to forget the intense debt of gratitude which the Mantuans themselves owed Carlo for his instrumental help in the crisis of 1394 when the city was besieged by the Milanese. <sup>34/</sup>

There is one more facet to the choice of Carlo which must be mentioned. Carlo's successful career in Milan had basically two advantages for Mantua. Firstly, it provided an amicable link with Milan itself, a matter which could not be ignored, and secondly, in the event of any difficulties with Milan Carlo's inside knowledge of Milanese affairs could be a distinct advantage for Mantua. As far as Francesco was concerned the second possibility may well have been the more pertinent given his own personal experience.

If the choice of Carlo Malatesta had many positive advantages, so did that of the Republic of Venice. Francesco's own standing with Venice was very high indeed. He had served the Republic extremely well in a military capacity offering both his own personal services and the strategic advantages of his city as a base for operations against the Carrara family. As we have already indicated, it was a choice which worked to the advantage of both sides. Not only did it give Venice a mandate to intervene in Mantuan affairs for her own benefit, but it gave Venice an even greater interest in maintaining the integrity of the Mantuan state as a possible buffer against Milanese expansion; and there was also a strong possibility of Gianfrancesco entering into military service with Venice when he became older.

Francesco, however, was surely thinking of the diplomatic value of Venice when he was considering the question of the minority. As a powerful, thriving and expanding state, Venetian support was instrumental as a counterweight against the growth of Milanese power. In effect, when he gave Venice the responsibility of acting for his son, Francesco was bringing into play the psychological as well as the physical support of a state in the ascendant, and this would prove to be very powerful sanction. If, as Raulich would have it, Venice was Francesco's "nuovo astro protettore", <sup>35/</sup> and this act was to relate Mantuan interests to Venice much more closely than hitherto, it was at the time paradoxically one of the best ways of securing the maximum degree of independence for Mantua. This was admittedly a situation which had both advantages as well as disadvantages for Mantua in the long run, as later events were to show; but in doing this Francesco was being supremely realistic in that Venice in 1407 was the best, and indeed the only, state to protect Mantuan interests.

The Doge of Venice, Michele Steno, was very quick to accede to the will of Francesco. On the 10th of April 1407 he addressed a letter to Carlo referring to Francesco's will: ".... in eius testamento in scriptis, tutoribus et curatoribus executoribus et comisariis una cum nostro ducale dominio." <sup>36/</sup> The letter goes on to refer to the solemn reading of Francesco's will and contains an assurance that he is prepared to accept the responsibility which it imposed and also to work hand in hand with Carlo. This was given a practical guise in the appointment of Francesco Foscari to represent Venice in the government of Mantua. Sanuto also mentions that Foscari was accompanied by Girolamo Contarini with 150 lances expressly designated for the defence of the city, <sup>37/</sup> thus at the same time maintaining a Venetian military presence. As the Venetian army as a whole consisted of only 500 lances at this time, the relative strength of the contingent sent to Mantua indicates how seriously the situation was being taken.

This dual system is perfectly in accord with Francesco's way of thinking. It seems certain that he intended Venice and Carlo Malatesta to fulfil rather different functions. Although there was a physical presence of Venice in Mantua, the day to day running of affairs appears to have been decisively in Carlo's hands. However, it must not be assumed that Venice was a mere cypher in any way. The function of Venice perhaps served to back up and reinforce what Carlo was going to do. It would be wrong to judge Venice's position as being purely nominal because there were a number of subsequent occasions in which it made its presence felt. In fact, the Venetians were perfectly content to remain in the background as long as they approved of what was going on in Mantua. Anyhow, together Venice and

and Carlo presented the strongest possible front to neighbouring states.

Finally, it must be remarked that Francesco was very wise in not appointing tutors for his son from within Mantua. The Gonzaga in general were very wary indeed about whom they appointed to the highest offices. In the particular circumstances which existed in Mantua in 1407 it would have been very unwise to make an internal appointment. It would have so easily caused jealousy and unrest. This was certainly to be Gianfrancesco's judgement after the unfortunate experience resulting from the ambitions of the Albertini family.

In conclusion, then, the arrangements for the minority were the best, and indeed the only logical solution in 1407 and the arguments and issues which surrounded them are a very good example of the problems which could confront states like Mantua lying in the shadow of the great territorial powers. They owe much of their success to the judgement and foresight of Francesco Gonzaga.

### III

#### The Orientation of the New Regime

The paucity of documentary evidence for these years makes it difficult to present any definitive statement on the orientation of the new government. However, despite this major difficulty there is enough in chronicle sources and such archive collections as the 'Libro dei Decreti' and the 'Gridario' for us to form a general picture of the issues which the new regime was to face. It must be assumed that Gianfrancesco himself had little or no part to play in these years, but in view of remarks made by contemporaries regarding his precocity, <sup>38/</sup> it would be reasonable

to suggest that he was an intelligent boy and much attention had been given to his education by his parents, especially Margherita Malatesta, who herself came from an exceptionally well educated family.<sup>39/</sup> In later years, Gianfrancesco, along with his remarkable wife Paola Agnese Malatesta, were to show themselves a very considerable interest in the education of their own children when they invited Vittorino da Feltre to Mantua.

Gianfrancesco's tutors took their responsibilities seriously. In particular there is a certain amount of evidence to indicate how punctilious Carlo Malatesta was in carrying out his duties. It would appear that in his zeal for defending his nephew's interests he was prepared even to question the rights of his own family. In 1408 he sided with Gianfrancesco against his own brother Pandolfo in a dispute over the rights to the castle at Piubega. From their dealings with each other in the period immediately preceeding the battle of Binasco it would appear that Carlo's powers of persuasion were quite considerable over his somewhat wayward brother.<sup>40/</sup>

As an issue in itself the dispute over the castle and its land was a small one, but the text of the letter itself does give us an indication of the image which Carlo's administration was aiming to project. In the short letter there are constant references to Francesco Gonzaga, and it seemed, in general, that Carlo intended to model himself very closely upon his erstwhile colleague in the policies which he was to adopt. In this particular instance it refers to agreements previously reached over the question of Piubega between Francesco and Pandolfo. In short, it seemed that even Pandolfo was aiming to capitalise upon his brother's position in Mantua for his own benefit, and this, as we shall see, was to be the main general problem which the new administration was to face.

Those who had hoped to take advantage of Gianfrancesco's youth and inexperience had reckoned without Carlo, who seemed at once to appreciate the immediate problems he had to deal with. These problems were basically two-fold. It was essential to make the new regime acceptable within Mantua in order to silence any potential opposition; and also to project a strong and resilient image to neighbouring states. There can be little doubt that many people such as Terzi and Niccolò d'Este would be very interested indeed in the direction which the Mantuan government was to take.

The first and most obvious point worth making is that a strong impression of continuity was given. This was only to be expected from Carlo, a man who had been so closely associated with his father. It was most immediately important for the administration to allay any fears which there may have been as to the efficiency of the government. Quite apart from this matter there was, in effect, no real need to make any major changes at all in view of the fact that Francesco's own administration had been efficient and popular. Given the delicacy of the situation caution was the only sensible course. If we are to believe the stories of the chroniclers it would appear that the Mantuans were very jealous of their customs and liberties and they were prepared to voice their opinions if they felt that they were being interfered with. <sup>41/</sup>

Generally speaking, this was a period of successful consolidation, of providing a sound basis upon which Gianfrancesco himself could build when he was to come of age. Judging from the extant sources it seemed that the new administration intended to be fair and impartial while on a number of occasions being strict. During this initial period there are no instances of



any corrupt practices, and on the whole the affairs of the city proceeded quietly and smoothly: the same officials continued in their posts.

The intention of the new government were proclaimed quite uncompromisingly in the very first 'grido' of the 24th of March 1407. It said of Gianfrancesco; "le gratie le quale luy (Gianfrancesco) intende de fare siano libere e gratiose o *senza alcuno premio over tributo*" <sup>42/</sup> This same 'grido' goes on to declare that having stated its intention to be equitable the government will punish severely anyone who attempted to use bribery in order to secure favours. Not only would the favour be nullified, but there would be a fine of four times the amount of the bribe. There were the usual rewards offered to those who gave information leading to the discovery of such malversation. While we are not in a position to be able to judge whether or not these measures were successful, they at least indicated the good intentions of the administration.

Similarly, the only other decree from this year, issued in the same 'Gridario' for 26 March indicated the desire to be merciful. Pardons were issued to those who had committed minor offences and were living outside Mantua. In addition to this debtors were given a period of grace to return and settle their affairs in order to avoid a term of imprisonment. <sup>43/</sup>

The new regime was quite naturally preoccupied with the question of internal order and there consequently appears at regular intervals in the 'Gridario' the reminder that the carrying of arms in the city was prohibited. There was also a continuing interest in the maintenance of fortifications. On 14 June 1407 repairs were made to the bastion at Ostiglia. <sup>44/</sup>

As we have seen, there is nothing very startling or original here. In effect, the government aimed to maintain a low profile in so far as it was consistent with the preservation of the *status quo*. The motto appears to have been 'strength without ostentation'.

In projecting this image Carlo had shown that he had got his priorities right because it was only upon the basis of a government which had the approval and confidence of the city that he could turn his attention to the second, and perhaps more pressing, of his immediate problems - Mantua's relations with other states.

This was a field in which Carlo could bring into play his own special knowledge and experience. In the wake of the decline of the Milanese state he had not only to convince other states of the strength of Mantua itself, but he also had to insure against possible trouble by providing Mantua with as many allies as possible.

What was needed here was a policy of consolidation without too much active commitment. A minority could be an especially difficult time for foreign policy unless there was a strong sense of direction. Carlo had to show, above all, that Mantua was no mere 'push-over' for other states who wished to appropriate Mantuan territory for themselves. In particular, the area to the south of the city, the so-called 'Serraglio', was especially vulnerable. Indeed, it had been the object of Milanese policy in the last stages of Giangaleazzo Visconti's expansion.

Initially, the best form of protection lay in establishing harmonious relationships with neighbouring states in order to supplement the support which would obviously be forthcoming from Venice. Here Carlo could not only

count upon family connections to help him, but also upon his own considerable personal reputation.

Carlo already had the friendship of Ferrara. Just before his death Francesco had reinforced his already strong ties with Niccolò III d'Este by signing with him on 22 February 1407 a league of mutual aid. <sup>45/</sup> The relationship between Gianfrancesco and Niccolò was to be very close indeed; it was the most constant factor in his foreign policy and was a relationship later to be reinforced by strong family ties which was to stand him in good stead particularly in the crisis year of 1438. <sup>46/</sup>

This alliance was something which Carlo could build upon and consequently it was not surprising that on 27 July 1407 another league of mutual defence was signed with Venice, Ferrara and Pandolfo Malatesta. <sup>47/</sup> This was the first treaty of Gianfrancesco's rule and provides us with an excellent example of what Carlo was trying to do. The inclusion of Pandolfo Malatesta in particular was a very politic move in that it gave both Mantua and Brescia an interest in maintaining the *status quo* as far as territorial demarcations were concerned. It was clearly Carlo's aim to provide the maximum protection of Mantua from as many sides as possible.

Moreover, two other factors may be deduced from the details of the league, which was to last for five years. These details were published on 5 August and the fact that the league was authorised not only by Gianfrancesco's tutors but also by the podestà of Mantua shows just how anxious Carlo was for his actions to receive the approval of the city authorities. <sup>48/</sup> The details of the military arrangements also show how small Mantua's commitment was. Venice was to provide 300 lances, Pandolfo Malatesta 125, Ferrara 50,

but Mantua was only to provide 40. This may well have been in deference to Gianfrancesco's youth, but the fact that all Mantua lands "citra Padum quam ultra Padum" were to be protected would indicate a very good bargain indeed. <sup>49/</sup>

The negotiations between Mantua and Venice, however, were not at all easy on the point of the size of Mantua's military contribution. It would appear even at this very early stage that Venice was most anxious to insist that Mantua should pull its weight from a military point of view. <sup>50/</sup>

The key word in relations with other states, then, was defence; but such notions did not always dictate a passive policy. Mantua was prepared to take very positive steps to prevent any encroachment upon its territory and this is amply demonstrated by the dealings with Ottobuono Terzi of Parma.

Terzi's actions, which were extremely unpredictable, served only to put neighbouring states on their guard. He made repeated incursions into neighbouring territory and, if we are to believe Delayto in his "Annales Estenses", the nature of these expeditions was extremely violent. His tactics of terrorization apparently made him extremely unpopular in Parma itself. <sup>51/</sup>

As far as Mantua was concerned, Terzi's activities were alarming. The geographical position of Parma to the south of Mantua meant that Ottobuono could more easily threaten an agriculturally fertile area which Mantua wanted undisturbed. Although, relatively speaking, Ottobuono was not a particularly dangerous threat, it could not go unopposed, and this was an opportunity to bring into play the system of alliances which Carlo had built up during the previous year.

This was also a good opportunity to enlarge the circle of Mantuan alliances and the league which was formed in May 1408 included not only Ferrara and Brescia but also Cabrino Fondulo of Cremona and Giovanni Maria Visconti of Milan. The Milanese alliance was once again a very politic move, but in the circumstances it was hardly surprising given Carlo's standing in Milan. <sup>52/</sup>

The action of Mantua against Terzi is perhaps more valuable as a question of principle than merely for itself. As matters stood it was imperative for Gianfrancesco's administration to show a strong front. Tarducci discusses a letter which Gianfrancesco had written in reply to Terzi on 3 September 1408. Although it is not possible to discover anything about the background to this document, which presumably refers to an incursion which had been made into the Mantovano, the wording of the letter is very significant. Although it was couched in the language of diplomacy, it indicated a very strong determination. It was not to be imagined that Terzi could hope to take advantage of Gianfrancesco even though he was young and inexperienced. <sup>53/</sup>

In the end it was Terzi's own unpopularity which finished him rather than any military action. There was an engagement between Terzi and the league on the 19th of June 1409 which was a foregone conclusion. Terzi's defeat convinced him that he could never hope to succeed by himself and he consequently applied to Niccolò d'Este to mediate a settlement. During the course of the negotiations at Rubiera Terzi was assassinated, apparently by one of the marquis's retinue.

This was a fortuitous solution to the problem. It would seem that everybody was relieved to have him out of the way. Delayto's account, a rather

exaggerated one, of Terzi's wretched end in which an infuriated mob near Modena "carne ac intestinis illius detestabilis cadaveris manducaverint" shows the tremendous hatred which the double dealing victim had generated against himself, <sup>54/</sup> and served as a sobering example to any other aspiring minor *signore*.

Not only had Mantua preserved its prestige in this affair, there was also a territorial reward. Mantua gained the valuable territory of Bozzolo in the Cremonese, according to Platina "sese sponte dedens". <sup>55/</sup> Such a spontaneous act, in addition to underlining the resentment which was felt against Terzi, is also a testament to the confidence which was felt in Mantua's powers of protection at that time.

The early years of Gianfrancesco's rule, then, are characterised by a cautious consolidation of power. The careful administration of Carlo Malatesta had not only guaranteed confidence within Mantua itself, but had also provided a sound diplomatic framework which could be built upon in the future, even though by this time he was beginning to fade from the Mantuan scene because of commitments elsewhere. Moreover, the Terzi affair had shown just how resilient Mantua could be. By 1409 it was perfectly obvious that Francesco Gonzaga's plans for the transference of power had been the best possible solution.

#### IV

##### Marriage

Marriage had always been an important part of Gonzaga policy and that of Gianfrancesco was no exception; in fact, a good marriage here was of crucial importance. However, as far as this matter was concerned, no especial

problem presented itself because once again Francesco had also provided for this contingency. As was normal at that time he had selected a prospective bride for his son and his choice underlined the very close attachment with the house of Malatesta. <sup>56/</sup> Paola Agnese Malatesta, daughter of Malatesta Malatesta of Pesaro was both a natural and a safe choice. <sup>57/</sup> It was certainly likely to receive the blessing of Carlo Malatesta who no doubt played some part in the selection. Quite apart from this it was always valuable to have the backing of a person like Malatesta Malatesta who had quite a considerable reputation as a military commander. At the time of the wedding Malatesta was still active; in fact he was involved as the commander of the Florentine troops in the war against Ladislas of Naples. <sup>58/</sup>

Paola was more or less the same age as Gianfrancesco. It is not possible to stipulate her exact age but most of the chronicle sources agree on the age of sixteen. The only document in the Mantuan archive referring to Paola's age is very vague. <sup>59/</sup> The only deduction one can make here is that she was over the age of fourteen.

Towards the end of July 1409 Gianfrancesco left Mantua for Pesaro in order to claim his bride, stopping some three days in Ferrara en route. <sup>60/</sup> Gianfrancesco was accompanied by an entourage befitting his status, a matter of considerable importance for the projection of the right image.

According to Paola's own testimony the marriage took place on the 22nd of August 1409 in the cathedral of Pesaro immediately after she had formally renounced her right of succession to her father's, mother's or brother's property. <sup>61/</sup> A copy of this document exists in the Mantuan archive and it also states the details of Paola's dowry: "..... dotatam in

quinguemillium ducatorum auri et in pannis vestimentis et iocalibus sibi assignatis pro eius arsinia et fulcimentis juxta et secundum conditionem ipsius ac dicti sui genitoris". <sup>62/</sup> Amadei also mentions the granting of some lands in the Bresciano <sup>63/</sup> but there is no evidence for this.

In fact the dowry was not paid promptly at all. At that time Malatesta was chronically short of money. Arrangements were made for the payment of the money on the following 23rd April but it was not forthcoming despite the fact that the documents had been prepared beforehand. <sup>64/</sup> The money was not paid in Malatesta's lifetime and the sum was included in his will of April 1442: "..... item, relinquo .... Paulo filie mee quingua milia ducatos auri ..... pro dotibus suis, pro matrimonie iam contracto inter ipsam et Mag. Dom. Iohannis Francisco ..." <sup>65/</sup>

The choice of Paola was a fortunate one in a number of respects. Quite apart from the advantages of her family connections she herself was a person of quite considerable talents and education. She was an excellent example of that philosophy of equal educational opportunities for girls of gentle birth which characterised the Italian Renaissance. Aliprandi said of her:

"Honestà, gratiosa e cortese,  
da lei zaschun bone risposta avia,  
li sue virtù a ugnun eran palese."

She was certainly well equipped to take a full and active part in the political and administrative affairs of her husband and we shall see that Gianfrancesco came increasingly to rely upon her to run his affairs in Mantua during his absences; she was to be the only person he could implicitly trust.



It was not at all surprising that her intellectual talents should have been encouraged from an early age because education had occupied an extremely important position in both her mother's and her father's families. <sup>66/</sup> In particular, her father had considerable talent as a poet in his own right and much of his work appears to have been inspired by a deep religious sentiment. <sup>67/</sup> Indeed, it would appear very likely that Paola's own very deeply religious nature owes a great deal to her father, and both in the field of ecclesiastical patronage and education Paola was to leave an indelible mark upon Mantua.

Her personal qualities were such that Vespasiano di Bisticci named her and her daughter Cecilia among the most illustrious women of their day. <sup>68/</sup> He certainly believed that she was responsible for drawing attention to Mantua as a cultural centre. He said: "Fu nel suo tempo la casa sua ispecchio di grandissima onestà; o fu esempio non solo a tutta la terra dov'ell'era, ma a tutta Italia." Such a judgement is also corroborated by other chroniclers and commentators. <sup>69/</sup>

From the very beginning Paola showed herself to be a very organised young woman. Initially she was helped very much by Elisabetta Malatesta, Carlo's wife. Not long after her arrival at Mantua she had a detailed inventory made of all the articles in the Gonzaga household. <sup>70/</sup>

There is no documentary material to account for the time they spent away from Mantua. From the dates of the wedding festivities in Mantua itself which were recorded in the 'Libro dei Decreti' we must conclude that they did not return until the January of the following year.

The festivities in the city were considerable. They appear to have lasted from the 6th to the 25th January. All legal activities were suspended during this period of public holiday. <sup>71/</sup> An amnesty appears to have been granted to certain prisoners "contemplative festivitatum nuptiarum ad adventum magnifico et excelse domine Paulo ad maritum." From this document, and others relating to the festivities it seems as if Paola had arrived in Mantua some time after her husband and that Gianfrancesco may well have personally supervised the preparations for the celebrations.

This was really the first opportunity since his succession for a pretigious event in Mantua and it was consequently a very important exercise in public relations. This was precisely why the celebrations were so protracted. The details of the guests who attended were impressive. According to Platina there were delegations from Ferrara, Tuscany and Venice among many others <sup>72/</sup> and the details of the gifts which they brought gives us some indication of the magnificance of the proceedings. <sup>73/</sup> Gianfrancesco made a special request to Venice for "caratellos centum vini". <sup>74/</sup> In the end only sixty were sent because the bride's father provided forty himself. It was not surprising that the chronicler Aliprandi waxed eloquent over the general rejoicing:

"Li Mantuani non manchè in niente  
 si li riceverò cum alegra fronte  
 e di honorarli si non fano lente  
 ..... e tanto lo sonare  
 che tutto l'aire per quello risonava  
 non si poria a pieno tutto contare  
 la gran festa che per tutto si facia". <sup>75/</sup>

Contemporaries are fairly unanimous in their descriptions of the splendid tournament which featured as the centrepiece of the festivities. Tournaments were by no means unusual but the Mantuan one seems to have been especially extravagant including some 43 'cavalieri'. <sup>76/</sup>

It may well have been events such as this which prompted some writers to remark upon the extravagance of Gianfrancesco. <sup>77/</sup> However, such a display was important in order to demonstrate the stability and prosperity of Mantua to outsiders. It was clear that Gianfrancesco appreciated this because there was at least one other subsequent occasion when he showed that he was sometimes prepared to pay quite dearly for things which were likely to increase Mantuan prestige. <sup>78/</sup> The attendance at the wedding celebrations in itself is an indication of the success which Mantua had achieved in this field.

## V

### The Albertini Ascendancy and its Consequences

It is interesting to note in the inventory of wedding gifts received by Paola on 18 January 1410 that the third group of persons mentioned after Carlo Malatesta and his wife is Carlo Albertini and his brothers who gave "unus zoiellus auri cum una domina tenente in pectore unum ballassum et in summitate capitis unum smeraldinum cum perlis quinque a conto." <sup>79/</sup> Both the value of the present and the high position on the list indicate that as early as 1410 the Albertini family had come to occupy an extremely important position in Mantua. Over the next four years Carlo and his brothers were to dominate Mantuan affairs and their careers were almost to nullify all the good work which had been done to date. Indeed, the consequences of this ascendancy were to have a lasting effect on Gianfrancesco's whole approach to the problems of government.

The tutorship of Carlo Malatesta had one disadvantage. The fact that he had other interests both in Rimini and Milan, and later in Venice, imposed responsibilities which inevitably tended to draw him away from Mantua.

Naturally the very nature of his position in Mantua was temporary, although as a close member of Gianfrancesco's family there would be no doubt that he would continue to show a very keen interest in Mantua.

It was, however, unfortunate that after two years or so he began to fade out of the picture because his departure created in a sense a power vacuum at a time when Gianfrancesco was not yet experienced enough to fill it. The lesson he was about to learn was hard, but very salutary in the long run.

It was not exactly clear when Carlo Malatesta relinquished his responsibilities but at the end of July 1409, when Gianfrancesco left for Pesaro, Carlo Albertini da Prato was left with full powers in his absence. This, in effect, coincided with the period when Carlo Malatesta was drawn away to Milan to take up more onerous duties as a Ducal councillor. He had lately replaced Jacopo dal Verme in this capacity.

Carlo was later to be involved in the service of the Venetians in the war against Sigismund in 1412. In fact, Carlo was very much in demand throughout the period of Gianfrancesco's minority. Not only was he continually involved in Milanese affairs, but there is also evidence of his being involved in the Council of Pisa in 1409 in order to mediate between Gregory XII and his rebel cardinals. He continued in Gregory's service into 1411 as Governor in the Romagna. It is not, therefore, surprising that his attendance in Mantua tended to become more and more intermittent.

As their title suggests, the Da Prato family were of Tuscan origin, but they had probably settled in Mantua in the second half of the fourteenth

century. <sup>80/</sup> They soon entered the service of the Gonzaga family <sup>81/</sup> and the obvious talents of Carlo, Francesco and Stefano were brought to the attention of Carlo Malatesta. One of Carlo Malatesta's most important preoccupations at this time must have been to ensure that there were people sufficiently well qualified to advise Gianfrancesco during his absences. There is little doubt that the Albertini brothers were high in Carlo's favour at this time. As later events were to prove, they were an extremely ambitious family, eager to push themselves forward at the slightest opportunity, and it was this, combined with their considerable abilities, which were to make them especially dangerous.

The confidence which Gianfrancesco showed in Carlo Albertini is well illustrated by an entry in the Book of Statutes for 16 July 1409 <sup>82/</sup> which states explicitly the powers which were to be accorded him during Gianfrancesco's absence. The fact that he is described as "consocii nostri amatissimi" itself demonstrates how close he was to the centre of power. He was given full powers: "... potestatem balyiam et specialem et liberam facultatem onnes et singulas apellationum reclamationum et supplicationum causas quas ad ad nos tam de iure comunis quam ex forma statutorum nostri comunis Mantue specialiter devolvi continet per id totum absentie nostre tempus comittendi ac delegandi uni et pluribus, secundum quod ei videbitur convenire et quemadmodum *nos si presentes essemus aut facemus aut facere possemus.*" In other words he was to have full viceregal powers <sup>83/</sup> which extended not only to the city of Mantua itself, but also to all territories comprising the Mantuan state. <sup>84/</sup> These powers were to last for the total period of Gianfrancesco's absence. Although this document is in Gianfrancesco's name, it is clear that this was very much the wish of Carlo Malatesta. The granting of such extensive powers to one man can only have been made to someone who possessed exceptional ability. In addition to this Carlo's

brothers could also be useful. They already seem to have drawn attention to themselves in Francesco's Gonzaga's time. While Carlo's talents were of a political nature, Stefano had considerable legal talents and Francesco was a soldier. On the 31st of March 1412 he appeared with the title of Gianfrancesco's Captain General to whom the defences of Mantua were entrusted.<sup>85/</sup> There was also a fourth brother named Luigi who was not as prominent as the other three although he was to figure considerably in Gianfrancesco's dealings with Pope John XXIII. Together they proved quite a formidable team.

In the period from July 1409 to 28 March 1414 their ascendancy seems to have been absolute and throughout this period they were consistently rewarded with powers and gifts. There are some nineteen decrees in their favour in the "Libro dei Decreti" during this time which in itself would indicate the extremely high favour in which they were held. From the wording of these decrees it will be seen that Gianfrancesco's faith in the Albertini brothers was absolute and apparently uncritical, another indication of his political immaturity. In fact, it needed a near disastrous policy and considerable diplomatic embarrassment *vis-a-vis* Venice to make him realise the dangers of the position which he had unwittingly allowed to develop. We shall see that it was the diplomatic implications of Albertini policy which eventually contributed to their fall most of all because Mantua's extremely delicate position was severely compromised.

It would be worth while pausing to consider the main bequests which Gianfrancesco made to this family because of what they can tell us about his motives in rewarding them so lavishly and also because they represent the only really large bequests which were ever made by Gianfrancesco to any single family. The fact that they were never made again on this scale is indicative that Gianfrancesco had become very wary of making any more

reckless gifts during the period of his political maturity (i.e. from 1414 onwards).

Very soon after granting Carlo full powers in 1409, Francesco was given a considerable amount of land and property mostly in the area to the north of Mantua on the border with the Veronese towards Villafranca and Castiglione Mantovano. There were also smaller bequests to the east (Casalromano) and to the south (Reggiolo). This lengthy document <sup>86/</sup> shows the very high esteem in which Francesco was held: "... de bono in melius ..... semper crescat." The first part of the document consisted of an extravagant eulogy of Francesco's qualities. The bequests were to be hereditary. There would seem to be little doubt that part of the reasoning behind these grants was defensive, given Francesco's military abilities. After all, it was an important consideration given Gianfrancesco's absence from Mantua. On 15 August 1410 he was also granted property in Mantua itself, <sup>87/</sup> and a similar bequest was made to Ludovico in November 1412. <sup>88/</sup> On 28 September 1410 Francesco's rights over some of these territories were extended. These consisted principally of fiscal immunities. <sup>89/</sup>

On 7 August of the same year Carlo was granted the sum of six thousand ducats "quam possit emere quandam possessiones in Veronensem". <sup>90/</sup> It is very interesting to note the very considerable Albertini power which was building up in this area. In the preamble to this document a great deal of emphasis was placed upon the continued fidelity of the Albertini family and recognition is made of their past services. <sup>91/</sup> The important bequests for this year were completed by the granting of judicial powers to Stefano during Gianfrancesco's absence. On 25 October he was granted powers to decide "omnes et singulos questiones et causas quarum commissio ad nos spectare..." <sup>92/</sup>

From the very beginning, then, the Albertini brothers were closely associated together in guiding the affairs of Mantua. Even by the end of 1410 their power and influence tended to make them potentially dangerous and before long they were to gather around themselves a significant group of supporters.<sup>93/</sup> This can be seen as the start of an insidious build-up of power,<sup>94/</sup> and this is further underlined by gifts of land to Stefano and Francesco. On 16 March 1413 they were granted lands around Reggio in the area of Gonzaga, Luzara, Guastalla, Nuvolari and Coreggio<sup>95/</sup> on much the same terms as those granted to Carlo previously. Exactly a month later, on 16 April 1413 Stefano, who at the time was Podestà of Mantua, was once again granted extensive powers of a judicial nature during Gianfrancesco's absence.<sup>96/</sup>

At this early stage it was obviously politic to keep on good terms with Carlo Malatesta and his family. Carlo Albertini was particularly fortunate in this respect because it brought him even more property. There is the well documented instance when, in November 1411, he was invested with land around Piubega which Gianfrancesco held in common with Pandolfo Malatesta. The final document was drawn up on 22 November 1411<sup>97/</sup> but there are references in the "Libro dei Decreti" concerning this on 13 November.<sup>98/</sup> There had been an agreement between Francesco Gonzaga and Pandolfo that the fortress at Piubega should be destroyed; but Carlo was expressly absolved from this provision<sup>99/</sup> and moreover his control over the area was to be absolute.<sup>100/</sup> This document more than any other demonstrates how powerful Carlo's hold over Gianfrancesco had become. In November of the same year when Gianfrancesco had to be absent he placed his trust implicitly in Carlo. The viceregal powers were continually renewed,<sup>101/</sup> the last one occurring on 16 October 1413 when Gianfrancesco was absent in Bologna.<sup>102/</sup>



All these bequests added up to a formidable concentration of power and Gianfrancesco had allowed this to happen not only because he wanted stability and continuity during his absences from Mantua, but also because he was anxious to keep their friendship. While such generosity was perfectly in accord with the estimation of contemporaries concerning Gianfrancesco's nature, it would be more indicative of a lack of personal confidence on his part; it showed his lack of experience in handling men. Moreover, the Albertini, with considerable political experience behind them together with Gianfrancesco's unquestioning support, were quick to appreciate this fact and also to act upon it. It was not surprising in these circumstances that the Albertini began to take an increasingly prominent part in formulating Mantuan policies, policies which were designed primarily to further their own ambitions rather than explicitly to serve Mantuan interests. Such developments in Mantua were clearly disturbing to Venice. As early as 29 May 1410 the Senate decided to send an embassy to Mantua with precise instructions to find out what was going on. They were charged to make discreet inquiries about the precise nature of Albertini power: "de statu et conditionibus suis, et sui regimini ac modos quibus conservantur fortillitia et loca sua." They were urged to insinuate themselves into their confidence if at all possible: "debeatus omnia trahere et comprehendere de mente sua". It was, therefore, Venice's intention to monitor very closely, though quietly, developments in Mantua. <sup>103/</sup>

The first manifestation of a new policy occurred at the end of 1411 when Mantua abstained from actively joining Venice in its war against Sigismund. In fact, the tendency during the years of the Albertini ascendancy was for Mantua to orientate itself more and more towards the Emperor and the Austrian princes, rather than sticking exclusively to the traditional alliance with Venice. This policy contained within itself important

complications. It meant that Gianfrancesco was going against the avowed policies of his two tutors who had done so much to establish a strong basis for his position. On 25 January 1412 Carlo Malatesta was appointed as Captain General of the Venetian army against Sigismund<sup>104/</sup> and it would have been natural to assume that Gianfrancesco would join him. This, after all, was an excellent opportunity to gain valuable military experience. The neutrality of Mantua, therefore, must have come as a great surprise to Gianfrancesco's uncle.

There can be little or no doubt that the responsibility for this decision lay totally with Carlo. It is very difficult to explain Gianfrancesco's reasons for following this policy other than that he had placed himself entirely in Carlo's hands in this matter, trusting to his greater experience of such affairs. It has also been suggested that Gianfrancesco wanted to demonstrate his independence of his tutors by following a separate policy<sup>105/</sup> and, moreover, that Carlo encouraged him in this line. While there may very well be a great deal of truth in this argument, it must nevertheless be emphasised that at this juncture Mantua's official position was one of neutrality and there was no active military commitment on the side of Sigismund.

However, it was potentially dangerous to arouse the suspicions of Venice which up to this point was the only state powerful enough to protect Mantua. It was impossible to maintain a position of neutrality indefinitely and, taking into consideration the recent history of Imperial intervention in Italian affairs, a pro-Imperial orientation would be likely to prove extremely impolitic. This is precisely why Carlo Albertini's policies could largely be interpreted in terms of selfish motives.

It had already been noted that the Albertini family owed a great deal to the Emperor; in fact they had always been pro-Imperialists whereas the Malatesta had been Guelf in sentiment. However, it would be erroneous to assume that the issues were as clear cut as a straight Guelf/Ghibelline confrontation. In this respect the arguments put forward by Tarducci need some qualification.<sup>106/</sup>

A pro-Imperialist policy was not completely disadvantageous for Mantua. In 1412 Sigismund was badly in need of Italian support especially as he was most anxious to undertake the 'Romzug', and he might be prepared to pay quite highly for it. In particular he might well be persuaded to reconfer the title of Marquis upon Gianfrancesco<sup>107/</sup> and this issue was to play an important part in the secret discussions conducted during this period. Any success obtained in this field was clearly likely to strengthen Albertini influence with Gianfrancesco.

Another possible argument for supporting the Emperor at this time was that the political situation in Italy in 1412 was more conducive than ever to success. Only Venice was strong enough to resist, and possibly Ladislas of Naples; but Milan and the Papacy were much too weak to put up any fight. If Sigismund were to be successful here Carlo would expect to be highly rewarded for his help.

In examining the relations between Mantua and Sigismund during this period it is very important to emphasise that discussions were conducted in almost total secrecy. In fact there is only one official document in the Gonzaga Archives which could be used to illustrate the subject matter of these negotiations.<sup>108/</sup> The only information available comes from the

records relating to the arrest, interrogation and trial of the Albertini brothers and their accomplices in 1414.<sup>109/</sup> The documentation here is very full and offers statements from a number of different people which can give a number of different sides to the same story. Although these papers have been examined by Tarducci in some detail,<sup>110/</sup> it would now be opportune to reassess them in order to answer two important questions. Firstly, why Gianfrancesco was prepared to allow these potentially dangerous relations to proceed; and secondly, why the Albertini brothers fell from power so rapidly.

It had already been suggested that a pro-Imperial policy by Mantua was not necessarily incompatible with maintaining good relations with Venice, provided that this excluded any definite military commitment. It could well be argued that it might be positively advantageous for Mantua to keep its options open for as long as possible. It has even been suggested that it was likely that Carlo Malatesta may have favoured Gianfrancesco capitalising upon Sigismund's financial needs in order to facilitate the re-conferring of the Marquisate.<sup>111/</sup> This was especially true in the period following the truce between Venice and Sigismund in April 1413 when the possible diplomatic complications were somewhat eased.

In short, it would appear that Gianfrancesco was perfectly happy for discreet negotiations with Sigismund to proceed as long as they did not actively jeopardise Venetian relations unduly; especially as there was always the alluring possibility of an Imperial title over the horizon. This reading of the situation would account for the nature of the missions to the Emperor of Gasparo da Mantova whose evidence in the trial papers is of crucial importance. Although he was a highly intelligent and persuasive

man,<sup>112/</sup> the choice of a friar to conduct these delicate negotiations would underline their secretive character.

Throughout the detailed account of his five missions to Sigismund can be detected two definite strands: the first, which amounted to protestations of Gianfrancesco's loyalty, and second, the fact that Carlo Albertini's own name was being continually pushed forward, another indication of Carlo's extreme resourcefulness.

"Prima via fuit de mensa aprilis 1412 ad Hungariam usque Budam".<sup>113/</sup> This first mission of Gaspare's took place during the active hostilities between Sigismund and Venice and precisely because of this the nature of his mission was extremely general. It consisted only of general affirmations of obedience and an apology that Gianfrancesco was not able to send an official embassy to Sigismund for fear of openly going against his tutors. Furthermore, he promised personally to pay homage to him as soon as he came to Italy. On the surface these were extremely weak arguments to justify sending Gaspare; in reality Gianfrancesco had already effectively thrown off his tutors. Gaspare's commission had been very carefully thought out by Carlo Albertini beforehand. It was part of his plan to proceed by gradual stages, and this was designed to keep Gianfrancesco happy as much as anything else. What perhaps was more significant about this first mission was that Gaspare was instructed to emphasise the continued loyalty of the Albertini family to the Imperial cause and to assure Sigismund that Carlo would work to bind Mantua more closely than ever to him: "..... ipse dom, Karolus iuxta suum posse reducebat dominum suum (Gianfrancesco) *et semper reduceret ad obedientiam imperialem*".<sup>114/</sup> This last phase states Carlo's intentions unequivocally. From the start Carlo was pushing himself

forward as the prime instigator of this policy of friendship with Sigismund and he was to continually remind the Emperor of this in the subsequent missions.

Sigismund's reaction to this first mission was such as to encourage Carlo's optimism. Hard pressed by the Venetians Sigismund was clearly grateful for any friendship, albeit platonic, that was forthcoming. He was in no position to dictate terms and was prepared to accept Gaspare's protestations at their face value. It was even reported that it might be politic to appear to help the Venetians by sending a contingent of men in order to dispel any doubts which the Venetians might have concerning Gianfrancesco's loyalty.<sup>115/</sup>

Gaspare's first mission had achieved its purpose, but this was due partly to the vague commission which he had received and partly due to the situation in which Sigismund had found himself at the time. Nevertheless, the ground had been prepared; but could Carlo now build upon this with equal success?

Gaspare's second mission in October 1412 was prompted by the Emperor's presence in Friuli. It was expressly designed by Carlo to impress;<sup>116/</sup> but on this occasion the instructions were more specific and included a request regarding the title of Marquis which had originally been conferred upon Francesco Gonzaga by Wenceslaus in 1403. This request altered the whole character of the mission. The political situation was liable to fluctuate very rapidly in Northern Italy and Sigismund, perennially short of money and help, was not in a giving mood. Specific requests like this were very different from vague sentiments and consequently the Emperor

replied by reminding Gaspare that the promise of personal fealty had not been fulfilled. The political situation was once more rather difficult,<sup>117/</sup> and what the Emperor was demanding in effect was that Gianfrancesco should come out into the open on his side.

The inconclusive nature of the second mission was distinctly alarming and Carlo was more anxious than ever to placate the Emperor. He therefore tried to kill two birds with one stone by quickly sending Gaspare to the Emperor for the third time promising that he (Carlo) would go personally to him in order to swear fealty in Gianfrancesco's name,<sup>118/</sup> thereby advancing his own aspirations while ostensibly acting in Gianfrancesco's interests.

Tarducci has argued that Carlo's act of swearing allegiance to Sigismund at Udine in Gianfrancesco's name was definite proof that he had thrown off his tutors.<sup>119/</sup> A more realistic explanation would be that Carlo was anxious to save a difficult situation by retaining the initiative in his own hands. It was no mere coincidence, furthermore, that this act coincided with an improvement in the relations between Sigismund and Venice which resulted in the truce of April 1413.<sup>120/</sup>

From this point onwards, however, Carlo found it increasingly difficult to advance his own position without seriously compromising Mantua. However, secretive Gaspare's missions had been, Carlo, in the eyes of Gianfrancesco, was firmly committed to an imperialist policy and as such it became more and more difficult to back pedal. Moreover, Sigismund was now becoming more demanding. In particular he continued to be evasive over the question of the Marquisate, something which could be increasingly damaging to Carlo's credibility.<sup>121/</sup> There were also requests for tribute. In fact, Carlo was obliged to promise a sum of five thousand ducats.<sup>122/</sup>

Carlo was now virtually forced into a much more definite policy whereby Mantua's position, not only in relation to Venice but also to the Malatesta family, was jeopardised. It was this last consideration which finally forced Paola to make her presence felt.

The only way in which Carlo could now try to guarantee Mantuan security was by strengthening ties with pro-Imperial states. In April 1413 two important alliances were concluded with Cabrino Fondulo of Cremona and with the Austrian princes. On 3 April a mutually defensive league was signed with Cabrino Fondulo who was a staunch supporter of the Emperor. The league was to last for five years and Mantua was to provide a force of five hundred cavalry and a number of armed galleys.<sup>123/</sup> The signing of the league was the most definite act to date in placing Mantua irrevocably in the Imperialist camp and was clearly a move which could not be made without a certain amount of thought. Benvenuto de' Pegorini, implicated in the conspiracy, commented in his deposition that there was much discussion among the Albertini brothers about this at the time.<sup>124/</sup>

Ten days later, on 13 April, a league with the Austrian princes was signed.<sup>125/</sup> It is not clear what the purpose of this agreement was, but it was certainly designed to show the Emperor how far Mantua was prepared to go; a sort of public relations exercise. This last point is emphasised by the presence of Sigismund's representative Hugo de Hernoust (or Herforst) described in the Cremona treaty as "Consiliarius et procurator dom. Sigismundi regis Romanorum". It is certainly the case that these two agreements were made possible by the impending truce between Sigismund and Venice.<sup>126/</sup>



This point represents the highest water mark in Mantuan/Imperial relations during this period. Carlo had been drawn into a much deeper commitment. However, Sigismund was not the easiest man to deal with; in particular his demands for money were most embarrassing for Carlo to have to explain to Gianfrancesco. Gaspare notes that not long after these agreements were signed there was some trouble in that Sigismund was demanding more money and yet was not prepared to grant the privileges which he had promised. Sigismund was not disposed to have his activities questioned and a strong note appears to have been sent to Carlo and Gianfrancesco to this effect. <sup>127/</sup> At the best of times relations with the Emperor tended to be uneasy.

Up to this point Carlo Albertini and his brothers had been extremely fortunate in that, despite the fact that they appreciated the dangers inherent in their policies, Mantua had avoided getting into a conflict position with Venice. From now on, however, matters took a turn for the worse and when the Malatesta family became directly involved Gianfrancesco himself was forced to intervene much more fully in the policy making process.

Until now relations with Pandolfo Malatesta of Brescia had been generally harmonious. Pandolfo, as we have seen, had shown a particularly high regard for Carlo Albertini. Pandolfo's military reputation was high, higher in effect, than that of his brother Carlo.

Although Carlo Malatesta had distinguished himself in the war against Sigismund he had been seriously wounded in 1412 and consequently

Pandolfo had been asked to replace him as commander of the Venetian army, a task which he accomplished admirably.<sup>128/</sup>

When the truce was signed with Sigismund, Pandolfo, who had always coveted Cremona, was now anxious to capitalise upon his success. He therefore declared war on Cabrino Fondulo and invaded the Cremonese, barely a month after the defensive treaty between Cabrino and Gianfrancesco had been signed. Not surprisingly Cabrino appealed to Mantua for aid. At a time when Carlo was already disturbed by a cooling of his relations with the Emperor, he was now faced with honouring a treaty which would bring upon his head not only the ire of Pandolfo Malatesta, but possibly of Venice itself. It was a situation bristling with danger. Above all, it involved the obligation of waging war upon Paola's family.

This was the first really big crisis which Carlo had to face. The dilemma was considerable and Carlo chose the lesser of the two evils and remained aloof from the war. The possibility of a war with one of the foremost generals of the day was much too daunting, especially in view of the fact that the cost of such a war would be crippling for Mantua.<sup>129/</sup>

It may have been possible to put Cabrino off with vague promises but Carlo's biggest problem was in justifying his conduct to the Emperor. This was the subject of Gaspare's fourth mission. He left in August 1413 hoping to encounter Sigismund as he reached Como.<sup>130/</sup> Carlo must have sent Gaspare with some trepidation because his record in practical terms had been bad as far as the Emperor was concerned, and this was more than justified by Sigismund's response. Whereas he was perfectly prepared to accept his excuses regarding Fondulo he nevertheless required a much more open commitment from Gianfrancesco. He replied to Gaspare that he would

be content to take Gianfrancesco into his service with five hundred lances, ironically the same commitment as had been previously agreed with Fondulo.

However, it was not possible for Gianfrancesco to accede to this request at that time because he had been persuaded to take service with Pope John XXIII in order to help him in the Romagna. In particular, he was to ensure the continued loyalty of Bologna.

Gianfrancesco had no personal interest in Bologna but this was an opportunity for him to gain some military experience in an area which did not directly affect the balance of power in Lombardy. There is no real indication that Gianfrancesco himself showed any interest in the Great Schism, although it may be noted that at the time relations between John XXIII and Sigismund were particularly good.

Baldassare Cossa, described by Platina as "*vir quidem ingenio ferox et pluris audacie, quam pontificalis clementia et pietas requirebat*",<sup>131/</sup> a man of no mean military experience himself, had a special attachment to Bologna. He had been Legate in Bologna, having taken a prominent part in its recapture from the Visconti in 1403.<sup>132/</sup> In 1412 after a rebellion in which a popular government had been established, it had been restored, largely through the efforts of a prominent Bolognese lawyer Jacope Isolani, to John's obedience. It was absolutely essential for John, given the nature of his conflict with Gregory XII, to maintain his control of the city. Gregory's forces, strongly led by Carlo Malatesta, were always a menace. By agreeing to help John Gianfrancesco was placing himself against his erstwhile tutor, another factor which points to the degree of influence which the Albertini had over him.

Why did Gianfrancesco depart from Mantua at such a difficult stage in relations with Sigismund? The answer to this can only be a tentative one, but there is much to point to the conclusion that at this period the Albertini brothers were extremely alarmed at the way in which their policies were turning out and Carlo was most anxious to get Gianfrancesco away from Mantua, and consequently away from the growing influence of his wife. The idea of taking service with John was Carlo's and it is clear that in arranging this he made full use of Luigi Albertini, his brother, who resided in Bologna and who was high in John's favour.<sup>133/</sup> In fact, it is clear from the document in which Gianfrancesco's condotta was renewed in 1414 that Luigi was instrumental in the negotiations which led to Gianfrancesco's appointment in the first place.<sup>134/</sup>

According to Nerli Gianfrancesco left for Bologna on 19 October 1413,<sup>135/</sup> and Platina also adds that he was accompanied by Francesco Albertini.<sup>136/</sup> Although the reason given for this was that Gianfrancesco was young, it was also prudent for him to be consistently under Albertini influence at this stage.

What is more significant, however, is the date of the original condotta. There is no copy of this in the Gonzaga Archive, but the renewal mentioned above gave the precise date of the previous condotta. It was signed on 31 August 1413.<sup>137/</sup> Given the fact that Gaspare did not reach the Emperor until the beginning of November, it is possible to suggest a possible motivation behind this agreement. Gaspare's unnaturally long absence from Mantua must have made Carlo more anxious than ever about the outcome of his mission. At this stage it would have been disastrous to compromise Gianfrancesco and himself even further so soon after the Fondulo debacle. By committing Gianfrancesco to John XXIII he was consequently

precluded from concluding any other military agreement. In addition to this, Gianfrancesco's absence, which left him in complete control in Mantua, would give him valuable breathing space to try and resolve these diplomatic complications.<sup>138/</sup> It is true that such a move would do very little for his standing with Paola but at this time it was yet again a question of choosing the lesser of two evils. It was more important at this stage to avoid angering Pandolfo than angering Carlo Malatesta. In acting thus Carlo showed considerable judgement and foresight and it was borne out when Gaspare returned with Sigismund's request.

It is also significant that Carlo delayed sending Gaspare on his fifth and final mission until Gianfrancesco had left for Bologna. Gaspare on this occasion was once again given a very vague Commission - to reiterate Gianfrancesco's loyalty to the Emperor, explain the reasons for his inability to serve him for the time being, while holding out the possibility of his being able to accommodate him some time in the future. Carlo here was conscious of playing a very safe game, because Sigismund, anxious as he was to be crowned in Rome, could not risk falling foul of John XXIII, his only real hope at that time. Carlo was also confident that John would not readily release Gianfrancesco and, by working continuously with Luigi, such a situation could be maintained. Sigismund could do none other than accept this 'fait accompli' although, according to Gaspare's testimony, he showed that he intended to extend an invitation to Luigi himself to come and fight on his side if a suitable opportunity presented itself.<sup>139/</sup> For the time being, then, Carlo had manoeuvred himself out of a difficult situation.

Despite his youth and relative inexperience Gianfrancesco, no doubt ably assisted by Francesco Albertini, acquitted himself extremely well. By the terms of his condotta he was to supply a force of 450 lances

and 150 infantry,<sup>140/</sup> quite a considerable force. John XXIII had a high opinion of his talents<sup>141/</sup> and was more anxious than ever to retain his services after he had managed successfully to stave off an attack by Carlo Malatesta. This is borne out by the fact that John was unwilling to release Gianfrancesco for Imperial service in November of the same year.<sup>142/</sup> John, well qualified in assessing military talent, saw great promise in Gianfrancesco<sup>143/</sup> in this, his first real military experience. Gianfrancesco was accorded the privilege of accompanying John XXIII on his ceremonial entry into Bologna on 12 November.<sup>144/</sup> Quite apart from anything else this did a great deal for Gianfrancesco's personal prestige.

The same was true, to a certain extent, of John XXIII's stay in Mantua from 16 January to 15 February 1414, together with the papal curia and entourage. This occurred after John's meeting with Sigismund at Lodi when the Emperor made his unsuccessful attempt to obtain Gianfrancesco's services as well as discussing the Council of Constance.<sup>145/</sup> The visit was an opportunity for considerable festivity and many people from the surrounding area came to Mantua to see the spectacle - the city was overflowing with visitors.<sup>146/</sup> While such a visit of its very nature made Mantua the centre of attention, Gianfrancesco also gained materially from it. No doubt as a further reward for his military services, he was awarded the territories of Villimpenta, Ostiglia and Poletto in his own right.<sup>147/</sup>

However, apart from all this there were some rather more serious considerations taking place behind the scenes. Gaspare, as usual, was to make sure that Mantua was included in the truce between Sigismund and Venice. At that time Sigismund was too concerned with the discussions of the Council of Constance to become too deeply involved in Italian affairs.<sup>148/</sup>

To sum up so far: up to the time of John XXIII's departure from Mantua Carlo Albertini, by some skillful manoeuvring, had managed to minimise any active pro-imperial commitment for Gianfrancesco. By arranging his service with John XXIII, he had given Gianfrancesco his first real taste of military success. Furthermore, he had been careful to avoid coming openly into conflict with Venice. However, he could not avoid Mantua from becoming openly associated with John XXIII and Sigismund, and a 'via media' policy could not be continued indefinitely. Moreover, although the tricky question of Pandolfo Malatesta and Cremona had until now been circumvented, Mantua's position here would have to be stated categorically sooner or later. The very nature of Italian politics made Albertini's achievement here extremely transitory because when the difficulties of the Council of Constance had been sorted out Sigismund was determined once and for all to remove Pandolfo Malatesta from Cremona, and he was to be more consistent than ever that Mantua should give material guise to its hitherto vague promises. This once again was to resuscitate the whole question of Mantua's relationship with Venice but now in the context of a much more serious diplomatic framework. Active Imperial intervention in such affairs had always aroused the latent anti-Imperial tendencies of other states and Pandolfo Malatesta had not been slow to exploit this. He had formed a league with Milan, Montferrat and Genoa for mutual defence. Particularly important here was the support of Milan and the consequence of this was that Mantua was virtually forced into having to choose between honouring the treaty with Cabrino Fondulo or siding with Pandolfo Malatesta, who was still Captain General of Venice even though the war with Sigismund had ended. If Sigismund were to fail, and his Italian record had not been good, Mantua could easily become isolated. All this was tied up with the ambitions of the Albertini. They had gained

so much power and influence in Mantua and had become so deeply committed to the Imperial cause that in effect they had no alternative but to continue to support Sigismund. The prosecution of the war against Pandolfo Malatesta had become inextricably linked with Albertini survival.

According to the deposition of Benvenuto de' Pegorini in the trial papers Sigismund had issued instructions that Gianfrancesco should assemble as many men as he could muster at Ostiano in order to begin the hostilities.<sup>149/</sup> Despite frantic attempts by Carlo to get him to act Gianfrancesco refused to go to war. In his confession of the 13 April 1414 Carlo himself said bluntly that "*Dominus non erat dispositus rumpere guerram*".<sup>150/</sup> Here, at last, was an open disagreement between Gianfrancesco and Carlo, but it was not at all surprising in the circumstances. This was the first occasion in which there was the strong possibility of open warfare *directly* against a member of his wife's family who was strongly supported by other influential Italian states. What Carlo had feared so much was *now* a reality. This was an affair totally different from the campaign waged against Carlo Malatesta around Bologna where he had been acting in the interests of Gregory XII. Paola's influence here was no doubt great in making Gianfrancesco stand firm on the side of her family.

It was this which finally drove the Albertini in their desperation to treasonable measures, and the supreme irony is that it was Gianfrancesco himself who had given them the wherewithall to be successful. It must be said, however, that this step was only contemplated when all other attempts had failed.<sup>151/</sup> They hoped that the Emperor himself would make the decisive moves to compel Gianfrancesco by force to aid him; but when this proved a vain hope the Albertini were driven to planning the imprisonment of



Gianfrancesco and his family and to taking power themselves. There is even evidence that Pope John XXIII himself, afraid that a rapprochement between Gianfrancesco and the Malatesta would drive Mantua into the Gregorian camp, tended to favour such a move.<sup>152/</sup> It was support like this which tended to make the Albertini more and more audacious.

Increased pressure was placed on Carlo by the fact that Gianfrancesco now intended to declare himself openly for Pandolfo and furthermore that he intended to send his emissary Francesco dal Bosco to Venice in order to reaffirm his loyalty.<sup>153/</sup> This extreme divergence of policy now dictated swift action by the Albertini. The quicker they could imprison Gianfrancesco and take over power the better. They had much in their favour. Carlo had considerable power and popularity, Francesco had command of the troops who were extremely loyal to him.<sup>154/</sup> Pegorini in his deposition stated quite categorically what Carlo intended to do: "volo capere dominum et cursitare civitatem cum gentibus com. Francisci et facere huc venire imperatorem et cum ipsius auxilio et dictarum gentium domini Francisci facere me dominum Mantue".<sup>155/</sup> Furthermore, the brothers were already discussing plans for securing the surrounding contrado from possible attacks from the Malatesta by installing supporters in prominent positions. For instance, the fortress at Ostiglia was to be placed in the hands of Guido de Rippa and in the event of its being attacked it was decided that Gianfrancesco should be held as a hostage there "quod ipse faceret quidquid vellent".<sup>156/</sup> Similar plans were made for Bozzolo and Peschiera.

The plan, therefore, was very detailed and far-reaching. It really seemed that the events of 1328 were about to repeat themselves: but suddenly, on 26 March 1414, the Albertini brothers and their principal followers were arrested on charges of treason. The move was dramatic and unexpected, but came just in time.

It is not clear how the plot was discovered, but there are a number of factors to be considered in examining this, the first really important independent move of Gianfrancesco. First of all, it would be reasonable to deduce that for some time the Albertini brothers were alarmed at the influence of Paola on her husband. An intelligent and perceptive woman, it was not difficult for her to see the threats which surrounded her husband and she was quick to oppose an open attack upon her uncle. Moreover, the birth of a son, Ludovico, to her on 5 July 1412<sup>157/</sup> made her even more anxious to defend the succession. She could see these dangers much more clearly than her husband who until almost the last moment had shown complete confidence in the Albertini.

While the Albertini were very powerful, they nevertheless aroused a certain amount of opposition and this was especially true of the pro-Imperialist alignment. In fact the trial papers do show that amongst others Francesco dal Bosco and Uberto Strozzi were active opponents of this policy. As the ultimate implications of Carlo's policies became more and more evident it became easier for such people to make their views felt. However, the fact that Gianfrancesco only acted at the last possible moment is an indication that he needed some persuading.

It was fortunate in addition to this that a number of unexpected factors delayed the prospective coup at this crucial stage. Tarducci points out<sup>157/</sup> that there was some divergence of opinion among the brothers as to the means and methods employed to arrest Gianfrancesco. Moreover, at that time Carlo was apparently ill in the Gonzaga palace and his brothers were alarmed for his safety. Carlo's illness no doubt made Gianfrancesco more confident of striking when he did.

The dangerous game which the Albertini were playing alarmed some of the more irresolute supporters, and it had been suggested that the plot may well have been revealed to Gianfrancesco by Benvenuto de' Pegorini, whose evidence in the trial papers is easily the most extensive. Indeed, the suddenness of the whole affair bears all the marks of such a leak of information. Gianfrancesco's behaviour in declaring openly for Venice and his desire to send dal Bosco indicated an unprecedented firmness of purpose.<sup>159/</sup> The only thing that can be said with any certainty is that Carlo seriously underestimated Gianfrancesco and that he really was caught unawares; and also that the part played by Paola in these events must not be underestimated.<sup>160/</sup>

Including the four Albertini brothers there were altogether sixteen persons arrested, all of whom had considerable influence in the city.<sup>161/</sup> They suffered the fate of those who have betrayed their positions of high trust. Gianfrancesco was so shattered and disillusioned that the only thing he wished to do was to eradicate every sign of Albertini influence from Mantua. The brothers were arrested and the relevant information was tortured from them remorselessly.<sup>162/</sup>

A *grido* of 28 March 1414 required anyone, under pain of severe punishment, who had in his possession money or anything else belonging to or given by those arrested to disclose the details to the authorities within a period of two days.<sup>163/</sup> There was also a promise that the information would be kept secret to avoid any possible recriminations, but there were also rewards given to those who could furnish information about persons trying to evade this requirement. There were further proclamations in the following month. Those who had been given special privileges by the Albertini were to produce the relevant documents to the authorities.<sup>164/</sup> The same procedure applied to grants of citizenship.<sup>165/</sup> Nothing granted under Carlo's signature was to remain in existence; a sure indication of the bitterness which Gianfrancesco felt.

Everything the Albertini brothers owned was confiscated<sup>166/</sup> and they vanished for ever from public view. They were either killed off or they spent the rest of their days in prison. The trial papers suggest that Luigi might have been subsequently set free but there is no concrete evidence for this.

However, the most significant result of the discovery of the Albertini conspiracy was the re-affirmation of loyalty to Venice by Gianfrancesco's own visit to Venice on 7 May where, if we may infer from Sanuto, he was given a rather aloof and chilly reception.<sup>167/</sup> The important thing is that Gianfrancesco felt the need to go to Venice in person to save what he could of a difficult and embarrassing situation. His anxiety to establish his position is shown in the *grido* of 2 April in which all rebels from Venice or Verona were ordered to depart from

the Mantovano immediately.<sup>168/</sup> In terms of protection Gianfrancesco's best chance lay in re-establishing good relations with Venice. It had become painfully clear to him that this would most certainly *not* be the case with Sigismund. At the best of times the Emperor was only to be a makeweight in Italian diplomacy and his importance was linked very considerably to the relative power of the states who supported him.

Venice may have initially played the part of the hurt parent towards Gianfrancesco but even here it was ultimately useful for Venice to reinforce its ties with Mantua. Anyhow, by the end of 1414 the situation seems to have been saved. In the 'Senatus Secreta' documents for 27 December 1414 the answer to Gianfrancesco's protestations of loyalty towards Venice and his indignation at Sigismund was recorded: "..... sed dictus dominus Mantue filius noster debet esse certissimus quod sicut alias sibi diximus ita replicamus quod in quibuscumque casibus occurrentibus eundem et statum suum habebimus tamquam paterne recomisum".<sup>169/</sup> This must have been a considerable relief to Gianfrancesco.

The crisis over the Albertini was the point at which Gianfrancesco emerged as an assertive figure in his own right in Mantuan affairs. It was the point at which he reached political maturity. The lesson he had learnt was hard but valuable; and what is more, it was to affect his whole attitude to the governing of Mantua. In his youthful inexperience he had been far too trusting and he had consequently delegated vast powers to a single family; powers which had nearly destroyed him. In many ways it was fortuitous that the details of the plot were revealed by Pegorini, because had the coup been attempted successfully it would most certainly have meant a period of severe crisis within Mantua.

The very fact that the conspiracy had very nearly been successful now made Gianfrancesco much more wary in his choice of ministers. It is significant that we never again see another family or individual rising to supreme importance. <sup>170/</sup> From now on it was Gianfrancesco's wish to keep policy making decisions in his own hands. This did not mean that he did not take advice from the experienced people around him. Indeed, in future crises he was to value very highly the opinion of such men as Zenebaldo de Brolio and Matteo Corrado, but Gianfrancesco was always to make the really decisive moves himself.

Furthermore, in alerting her husband to the dangers which surrounded him, Paola emerged into the political limelight as an astute and forceful character. From now on she was to be no mere cypher in Mantuan affairs. In fact, she was to be her husband's best counsellor. Gianfrancesco placed a great deal of trust in her and was quite content to leave affairs in her hands during his absences. With her help Gianfrancesco could now begin to make his own distinctive mark in Mantuan political life.

## VI

### Widening Experience

The period between the fall of the Albertini and the beginning of the Lombard Wars is not particularly well documented either in the archives or by the chroniclers. As far as Mantua itself was concerned it was a period of peace in which good relations with Venice and the Malatesta were restored. In a sense, the relative tranquillity of this period is one of the more positive results of the success with which the conspiracy had been suppressed. The fate which the Albertini brothers suffered was

a salutary lesson to anyone else who might have similar aspirations. However, there is no evidence that there was anyone within Mantua either powerful enough or indeed disposed to take their place. Ever since the expulsion of the Bonaccolsi the Gonzaga had taken great care to ensure that there was no opportunity for a similar potential opposition to form itself. In fact, there is no evidence that the disposal of the Albertini aroused any reaction whatsoever. It is highly probable that many were relieved at the demise of this upstart family which had sought to divert Mantuan affairs into unaccustomed channels. They merely disappeared and Gianfrancesco took over the administration himself. There appeared to be no interruption in the administrative life of the city and, apart from those directly implicated in the conspiracy itself, there was no change of personnel. In fact, from what little evidence there is in the archives, it can be deduced that the affairs of the city ran fairly smoothly. Gianfrancesco was particularly concerned that standards of efficiency should be maintained. On 10 May 1419, for instance, there was a *grido* which tightened up the organisation of the Consiglio Maggiore which normally comprised 400 citizens. The Consiglio was the body which elected the city officials. Apparently there had been a growing apathy among the citizens in attending such meetings and the *grido* decreed that there should be a fine of two ducats for non-attendance, a sum considerable enough for the majority of the members to ensure that civic duties were performed.<sup>171/</sup>

A factor which had encouraged the Albertini to aspire to greater power had been that Gianfrancesco himself had given them a taste of viceregal power during his absences from Mantua. The provisions which he made for the government of the city during his absence in 1416, possibly fighting against Braccio da Montone, indicate very clearly that once again Gianfrancesco had learnt his lesson. On 19 March 1416 no one

was named as having overall administrative authority; instead those in charge of particular departments of the executive were given increased authority, being accountable to Gianfrancesco for their respective actions on his return.<sup>172/</sup> In reality the overall supervision was left to Paola, who was even now rarely absent from Mantua and whose role in the overthrow of the conspiracy had resulted in a greater share of the responsibilities of ruling. Her activities, especially in finding the money to finance her husband when he was away from Mantua, were to increase dramatically when the war finally broke out.<sup>173/</sup>

The basic keynote of this period is administrative and territorial consolidation and this was bolstered up by the prestige which the presence of Martin V brought in 1418. Furthermore, the campaign against Braccio da Montone, which in itself was a contribution to the normalisation of the relations with the Malatesta, gave Gianfrancesco another valuable opportunity to widen his military experience. The Albertini crisis had been a shock for Gianfrancesco. As well as its administrative implications it may have also brought with it an awareness of something he had perhaps not fully appreciated before; that the political orientation of Mantua was of greater importance to his immediate neighbours than he had previously imagined. This was to have the result of making him very much more careful in the sphere of diplomacy and this was one of the reasons why, as we have seen, he was so anxious to re-establish good relations with Venice. For its part, from now on the Venetian Senate was to keep a closer eye on Gianfrancesco and actively encourage the development of a closer relationship. Although this was to be more pronounced in the 1420's, it would be reasonable to assume that this was also the case during the period in question. For instance, Sanuto notes that Gianfrancesco was present in Venice at the end of April 1415 at festivities in honour of the new Doge, Tomaso Mocenigo.<sup>174/</sup>



The fall of the Albertini was important in another respect. In a way it may have served to restore credibility in the ability of the house of Gonzaga to rule in its own right. While it is true that at the beginning of his rule Gianfrancesco was too young to govern alone, his domination by the Albertini family at a time when he should have been emerging as ruler in his own right had augured ill for the future. The election of 1407 was very much a matter of faith and it is highly likely that the actions of 1414 had served to bolster up a faith which may have been flagging in some quarters. It was inevitable that there would be those who were ready and willing to draw unfavourable comparisons between father and son. An external manifestation of this was the return of Ostiano, Isola Dovarese and Rivarolo to Mantuan rule and the acquisition of Viadana. The only firm documentary evidence relates to Viadana, however. The other three areas are mentioned only by the chroniclers.<sup>175/</sup> They state that these areas in the Cremonese went over voluntarily to the Gonzaga. If this was, in fact, the case, it would tend to illustrate the advantages which the inhabitants hoped would accrue from inclusion in the Mantuan state.

The acquisition of Viadana, however, is well documented and the fact that this, together with the other three territories was under the domination of the Cavalcabò family tends to give credence to the unsupported assertions of the chroniclers.

Viadana had been in the possession of the Cavalcabò since the twelfth century but in 1415 the Viadanesi were very discontented with the oppressive rule of Andreasio Cavalcabò and it may well have been the case that the news of the acquisition of the other areas encouraged them to follow suit. It is certainly true that the position of Viadana,

commanding a bend in the Po, could be of great strategic value to Mantua. It is very probable that Gianfrancesco may have been in secret communication with Andreasio's enemies in the town. According to Parazzi, the historian of Viadana, the campaign of 18 June 1415 was a sudden and well planned affair and took the Cavalcabò completely by surprise.<sup>176/</sup> Gianfrancesco appeared with 400 infantry and a similar number of cavalry and occupied the fortress after a brief but fierce struggle. On the next day the citizens gathered in the main square to swear allegiance to Gianfrancesco. Although there is some controversy among the chroniclers as to whether or not the citizens were in favour of this action,<sup>177/</sup> it would appear from the official terms of the surrender that it was more of a mutual agreement than a conquest in the fullest sense of the word.<sup>178/</sup> Gianfrancesco promised to respect the privileges and customs of Viadana; he promised not to harm the Calvalcabò and return prisoners of war. In particular, he promised to respect the statute of 1350 which had regulated the government of Viadana.<sup>179/</sup> In fact, Viadana was to cause no trouble whatsoever to Gianfrancesco and this is the strongest evidence for the acceptability of Gonzaga rule in this area which was to prove a most valuable asset to the Mantuan state.

Not only had the Albertini crisis threatened the important relationship with Venice, it had also done a considerable amount of damage to the close friendship which had previously existed with Paola's family, the Malatesta. Gianfrancesco's involvement on the side of his former tutor Carlo can consequently be viewed as an attempt to renew that friendship. Braccio da Montone himself posed no threat to Mantua 'per se' but it was when he threatened Malatesta territory that Gianfrancesco decided to intervene.

In 1416 Braccio da Montone, who had been Captain General of the Church under John XXIII, taking advantage of the disorder on the Papal States, had decided to carve out a state for himself in Umbria. He had begun by occupying Orvieto in March, but in the following month he directed his attention to besieging his native city of Perugia.<sup>180/</sup> The defence of that city had been undertaken by Paolo Orsini and Carlo Malatesta, but the superior tactics of Braccio at the battle of S.Egidio on 12 July not only resulted in the fall of Perugia, but also in the capture of Carlo himself.<sup>181/</sup> Among the other prisoners taken was Paola's brother Galeazzo.

This success encouraged Braccio to follow this up during the succeeding months by waging a war against the Malatesta.<sup>182/</sup> This imminent peril induced Pandolfo to patch up his quarrel with the Visconti in order to stem Braccio's advance. According to Platina, in response to his appeals for help, Gianfrancesco appeared personally with a detachment of men.<sup>183/</sup>

Once again, there is no documentary evidence to substantiate Platina's account, although the details of Gianfrancesco's involvement are echoed by Equicola.<sup>184/</sup> According to Amadei, Gianfrancesco's force at the battle of Roccacontrada consisted of 800 cavalry and 2,000 infantry:<sup>185/</sup> however, such a figure has to be treated with a certain amount of scepticism. The battle was fiercely contested, but it is difficult to ascertain with any degree of impartiality the actual part which Gianfrancesco played in the fighting. Quite naturally Platina, who tells the story in some detail, highlights how bravely he fought despite the injuries he sustained, and how he was praised by Pandolfo himself afterwards, a considerable honour coming from such a seasoned warrior.<sup>186/</sup>

However, in this description of the battle which put a stop to Braccio's progress it is extremely difficult to separate fact from fiction. Indeed, it is very difficult to say with any certainty at all whether Gianfrancesco really took any part in the fighting at all and even Carlo d'Arco, that eminent historian of Mantua, was disturbed by the complete lack of any documentary evidence.<sup>187/</sup>

In the final analysis all that can be said is that there was a strong possibility that Gianfrancesco was present. If one takes into consideration the help he had given to John XXIII at Bologna and the subsequent interest he was to take in the affairs of the Malatesta family, together with the fact that his own wife's immediate family was seriously concerned, it is highly likely that a degree of involvement would completely accord with his aim to rehabilitate himself with his traditional allies. It may well be that Platina's eulogies have to be played down somewhat, but even if there were some truth in them, it would only be natural to suppose that a man like Pandolfo would have some word of praise and encouragement for his valiant young kinsman, a man who had already displayed considerable military potential, even though perhaps the real part Gianfrancesco may have played in the battle was not very great.<sup>188/</sup> Anyhow, if Gianfrancesco did take part in the battle it was an excellent way of proving his gratitude to a man who had done so much to establish a strong basis for his rule in Mantua.

Braccio da Montone had been able to pursue such a career of independent expansion because of the absence of any real papal control. However, the election of Oddo Colonna as Martin V on 11 November 1417 was to signal a revival of prestige and a reconstruction of temporal

control in Italy. When the Council of Constance was dissolved the Pope started on what proved to be a triumphal journey to Italy. His presence in Mantua from October 1418 to the following February was not only a privilege for Gianfrancesco and Mantua, but it also revealed quite a lot about how Mantua was regarded at that time by others.

Two questions spring to mind in the context of the papal visit. Why did Martin choose to go to Mantua at all and why did he stay there so long when he could have selected from any number of other larger centres from which to prepare for his final entry into Rome?

Even after Martin had entered Italy the disorders in Rome and the Papal States was such that it was impossible for Martin to proceed there directly. The whole journey was fraught with problems which directly or indirectly had been caused by the schism, and the Pope had to make sure of his friends and allies.

It had been decided, apparently, as early as 7 September that Martin should establish himself in Mantua for the time being.<sup>189/</sup> The reason for this decision was that Mantua was politically and geographically ideally placed for Martin's requirements. Not only was it a secure city as far as fortifications were concerned, but also its position midway between Milan and Venice prevented either of those larger powers from being jealous of the other. In the delicate situation that the Papacy found itself in, it was an obvious advantage to have the support, or at least not the active opposition, of the large territorial states. Furthermore, Mantua was sufficiently close to Martin's own territories to enable him to keep an eye on developments and to take remedial action wherever necessary.

Although the honour of playing host to the Papal Curia was considerable for Gianfrancesco, it also created considerable problems for him and it was just as well that nearly two months elapsed between the choice of Mantua and the Pope's eventual arrival at the end of October. At the end of September arrangements were begun to lodge not only the members of the Papal entourage, but also the large numbers of visitors who would be coming to the city. At the same time provision was also made to import the supplies which would be necessary to feed such greater numbers.<sup>190/</sup> It was impossible to tell at the time just how long the Pope would remain in the city.<sup>191/</sup>

The fact that this was a somewhat onerous privilege for Mantua is borne out by the actual terms of the agreement between Martin and Gianfrancesco which was dated 7 October. Gianfrancesco was to give hospitality to the Curia and their servants as long as Martin wished to stay; the Pope was to have "plenum, et libentum ac totalem dominium" and all Gianfrancesco's retainers had to swear an oath of allegiance to him.<sup>192/</sup> The Curia was to have complete immunity with swift punishment for those who violated it,<sup>193/</sup> it was to have complete freedom of movement, even at night, as well as financial and fiscal immunity. Anyone hostile to Martin was to leave Mantua and Gianfrancesco was to ensure the safety of all roads and communications and observe any safe-conducts which Martin might concede. Finally, Martin's own men-at-arms were to reside within Mantua and were to be accorded complete freedom of movement.<sup>194/</sup>

Martin made his solemn entry into Mantua on 24 October.<sup>195/</sup> The fact that he was the only legitimate Pope at the time made his presence more significant than that of Mantua's previous pontifical guest. He was to stay in Mantua for some three months and during this period he was to size

up the magnitude of the problems which faced him in his dominions.<sup>196/</sup> However, what tended to be more important as far as Mantua itself was concerned was that the city became very much the centre of attraction during this period when there were embassies to the Pope from all over Italy. Platina summed up the situation perfectly when he wrote: "Abiens Mantua Pontifex, subsequentibus omnibus ferme Italiae principibus, qui Mantuam ad salutandum hominem de more convenerant".<sup>197/</sup> Never before had Mantua been the focal point of such widespread attention and Martin's young host had a marvellous opportunity to advertise both himself and his state, and the prospect of this no doubt helped to reassure Gianfrancesco that the considerable amount of expense he was put to was indeed worthwhile. Furthermore, not only was Mantua the setting for the General Chapter of the Franciscan Order during this period, but Martin also took the opportunity to mediate the much sought peace between the Visconti and Pandolfo Malatesta,<sup>198/</sup> an action which perfectly complemented Gianfrancesco's own previous involvement on the side of his wife's family.

When Martin left on 2 February 1419 his departure may well have been a relief for Gianfrancesco, but although he himself had not gained anything concrete from this visit, it had achieved a great deal in projecting a very favourable image of Mantua to the rest of Italy as a haven of peace and stability. Indeed, it is arguable that the presence of Martin in Mantua for such a lengthy period is itself a testament to how successfully Gianfrancesco had managed to restore confidence after the Albertini crisis.

Furthermore, the presence of the Pope must have been a tremendous source of satisfaction to Paola, a woman of considerable personal piety. Indeed, the religious life of Mantua benefitted immensely by her encouragement and patronage. Not only did the Franciscan Chapter set the tone for Mantua's future history as a favourable centre for religious gatherings, but Paola herself founded and refurbished churches and convents in Mantua during this time. Although this activity lies outside the scope of this study, examples of the intensity of religious activity can be seen by the invitation to S. Bernardino of Siena to preach in Mantua during the Lent of 1420,<sup>199/</sup> her foundation of the Church of Corpus Domini and the Convent of S. Paola in which she and her daughter Cecilia spent their last years, and the enlarging of the Convent of S. Spirito.<sup>200/</sup> There were numerous other projects, but these examples serve as an indication of the way in which Paola by this time had deeply involved herself with all aspects of Mantuan life.<sup>201/</sup>

Paola was also behind the invitation extended to Vittorino da Feltre to come to Mantua in 1423. Although the formal offer came from Gianfrancesco, it is very probable that Paola, whose intellectual ability was widely acknowledged, should have been the guiding light. Vittorino had already pursued a distinguished career in Venice and Padua and his willingness to come to Mantua, ostensibly to oversee the education of her children at the 'Casa Giocosa', is another testimony to the esteem in which Mantua was held. The methods he employed were widely admired and attracted many people from elsewhere who hoped to benefit from them.<sup>202/</sup> Indeed, by 1420 it seemed that a number of artists and craftsmen had been attracted to Mantua, partly, no doubt, by the promise of work which Paola's patronage created, but also because Mantua was a peaceful and attractive place in which to settle.<sup>203/</sup> It was, in fact, part of a definite policy to



attract people from all walks of life to Mantua. On 12 October 1420 there was a *grido* which offered attractive terms for any artist or craftsman by which the city of Mantua was prepared to subsidise the rent of either a house or a shop to the extent of half a ducat per month for a maximum period of five years.<sup>204/</sup>

By 1420, then, Gianfrancesco had imposed his own style of leadership on Mantua, and he was lucky that for the most part these years of apprenticeship had been peaceful ones. He had overcome the most serious threat to his position from within Mantua and not only had Gonzaga rule been successfully rehabilitated within the state, but the all important friendship with Venice was re-established. From now on the threats were to come from outside. The years after the fall of the Albertini proved to be the calm before the storm. From 1420 onwards the clouds of war were to gather ominously over Lombardy and the peace and tranquility of Mantua was effectively to be shattered for the rest of Gianfrancesco's life.

CHAPTER 2THE EARLY YEARS (1407-1420)Notes

1. Aliprandi "Cronaca di Mantova", cit. p.168, ll 12588/9.
2. In dividing his inheritance between his two sons Giangaleazzo was virtually admitting the difficulties of ruling an over-large state, but the division in his will was in itself a fruitful source of potential rivalry, not only between his two sons, but also by rival condottieri. Giovanni Maria was to have Milan, Brescia, Bergamo, Como, Cremona, Lodi, Piacenza, Parma, Reggio and Bobbio, Filippo Maria was to have Pavia, Novara, Vercelli, Alessandria, Tortona, Verona, Vicenza, Feltre, Belluno, Bassano, Riva di Trento and all lands beyond the Mincio.
3. See Treccani, (Mi). pp. 75ff. The main source for this period is this volume. "Tutti i Visconti Signori di Milano avevano per il passato saputo difendere il loro diritto con le armi; era si trattava di due ragazzi i cui diritti erano esposti al beneplacite di amici o nemici" (p.76).
4. Treccani, (Mi), p.72.
5. Others in this group comprised Giovanni Vignati of Lodi, Carlo Cavalcabò, Cabrino Fondulo and the Benzoni of Crema.
6. Francesco Visconti, a descendant of Matteo, Otto Terzi and Theodore Paleologus were also associated with Cane here.
7. In a letter from the Carrara of Padua written to Robert of Bavaria, King of the Romans on the 23rd July 1403, there is a very grim picture of the looting and brutality which seemed to characterise daily life not only in Milan itself, but also in Crema, Brescia, Bergamo and Cremona. See Deutsche Reichstagsakten (Munich 1867), Vol. IV, p.105, no.100. See also Treccani, op.cit., pp.85ff.
8. See N. Valeri, L'Italia nell' Età dei Principati, op.cit. p.334, for a summary of this.
9. For a fuller study of Cane see N.Valeri, Facino Cane (Turin 1940).
10. In particular they were both associated with the negotiations leading to the peace of Caledio (see. Ch.1, note 65). Valeri has a very high opinion of Carlo. In the circumstances he notes that Carlo "dimostre quell'equilibrata discrezione che è il segno dei veri politici" L'Italia nell' Eta, op.cit., p.335.
11. For details see Treccani, op.cit., pp.123ff.
12. See above p.33.
13. For a full discussion of this see P.Partner, The Papal State Under Martin V. (British School at Rome 1958), pp.16-30.

14. She had died on 28 February 1399. See Tarducci, op.cit.,p.311.
15. He was responsible for restoring the fortifications of Ostiglia and supervising the final stages of the construction of the Castle of S.Giorgio.
16. 1399 Curtatone - Chiesa delle Grazie. Also the building of a new Chapel in the Palazzo Vecchio on the site of the old Chapel of Santa Croce. When Gianfrancesco was born in 1395 he ordered the repair of the old façade of the Cathedral and built a chapel there in 1396 to house the body of S.Anselmo, patron of Mantua. There were also other projects; see Arch. Gon. B. 3350, and also D. Matteucci, Le Chiese Artistiche del Mantovano (Mantua 1902); S.A.Maffei, Gli Annali di Mantova, op.cit.,pp.279ff.
17. For the reforms themselves see Arch. Gon. B. 2003. For a commentary see G.Zucchetti, Gli Statuti di Mantova (Mantua 1857).
18. See A. Michielotto, "Istituti di Diritte Commerciale nella Legislazione Mantovano", Riv. del Diritto Commerciale e del Diritto Generale dello Obbligazioni, vol. XXIX nos. 7-8 (Mantua 1931).
19. See Coniglio, in Storia di Mantova, op.cit.,vol.1, pp.429-432.
20. Francesco was very concerned about the question of the succession; something which Wenceslaus was very sympathetic about. Francesco wanted the title to pass, in the absence of any direct male heir, to the children of Guido and Giovanni. See Arch. Gon. B. 2, fasc.26 for the documents relating to this matter.
21. See Waller, op.cit.,pp.233ff.
22. Tarducci, op.cit.,p.314. See also C.d'Arco, Dei Dominatori Gonzaga e del Loro Governo, (Mantua Guastalla 1871), vol.IV, p.212.
23. This was to be the last of its kind. For this particular occasion see Tonelli, Ricerche Storiche di Mantova, cit.,p.284.
24. Writers differ in their estimates of Gianfrancesco's age. Platina (op.cit.p.293) says "qui vix duodecim annui attigerat". Possevino (p.487) says "Johannes Franciscus nondum duodecim annum supergressus". Equicola (Bk.3 p.136), Donesmondi (pt.1.p.349) and Agnelli (p.748) all agree on eleven years. Simeoni (Bk. 5, p.106) alone has suggested 14. For a discussion of this point see F. Amadei, Cronaca Universale (Mantua,1955) Vol.1. ch.II, p.719. See also Tarducci, op.cit.,p.316.
25. Amadei gives the year 1408 for this, although Arch.Gon.Libr. Decr.p.209 fixes it in 1413. This was a tremendous loss. See S.Davari, "I Palazzi dell'Antico Comune di Mantova e gli Incendi da essi Subiti", R.A.V.M. 1887/8, p.37.
26. Tarducci gives some account of glaring inaccuracies on pp.328-333.
27. See Tarducci, op.cit.p.314.
28. Tarducci, op.cit.,p.315. Arch.Gon.D.IV.II.
29. E.g. Equicola Bk.III,p.137. See also L.Volta, Compendio Cronologico-critico della Storia di Mantova (Mantua, 1807-1827) Bk.7, p.91. and Tone'lli, Ricerche Storiche di Mn. cit, p.254.
30. Amadei, op.cit.,p.718, says "codesto ragionamento fu opera et attenzione

politica de Venezia e del Zio Carlo Malatesta..... i quali solleccitarono una tale acclamazione." Although such an argument is possible, it is difficult to prove conclusively. We must not underestimate the personal initiative shown by Donato de'Preti in this matter.

31. All the sources agree on this date. The public act recognising Gianfrancesco appears in Arch.Gon. Lib. della Massaria. See Torelli, op.cit., p.254; Volta, op.cit., p.91. Also the Gridario for this period, in which a special volume was started for Gianfrancesco says of the 20th of March. "..... qua die prelibatis magn.dominus habuit dominium et capitaneatum Mantue".
32. Francesco Gonzaga's wife Margherita was Carlo's sister and Elizabetta Malatesta was Francesco's sister.
33. Poggio Bracciolini, "Hist.Lib. V", R.I.S. vol. XX, p.331.
34. He obtained aid (men and money) for Mantua from Padua, Bologna, Florence and Ferrara. His own personal success against the besieging Milanese troops is also noteworthy. Platina (op.cit.p.772), relates how he took some 6,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry prisoners. See Tarducci, op.cit., p.312.
35. Raulich, Caduta dei Carraresi, op.cit., p.96.
36. For documents relating to the tutelage of Gianfrancesco see Arch.Gon.B.335.
37. Sanuto, col.837; Tarducci, p.317.
38. E.G. see Possevino "Gonzagae", (Mantova, Osanna 1628), p.485. See also Amadei, op.cit.p.720.
39. His tutor was Masio di Malici da Borgo San Sepolcro. There is a reference to rewards which he received in Arch.Gon.Lib. Privileg.Com.Mant.no.2 fol.1225. See also in the Libro delle Fattorie B.33 (published by Tarducci in appendix no.5.). It referred to a grant of land. ".... possessionem nostram situatam in nostro Castellori Territorio." See also Volta, op.cit., p.91.
40. Arch.Gon.B.2185. (10 Sept.1408); publ.Tarducci, op.cit., appendix no.3. Although written in Gianfrancesco's name, Carlo Malatesta is its author. It is clear from this letter that he is encouraging Gianfrancesco to stand up for his rights.
41. There is, for instance, the celebrated incident of the casting of the statue of Virgil into the Mincio. Apparently each year on the 15th of October there was a festival to celebrate the birthday of Virgil. This took place in what is now the Piazza Erbe, where there had been a statue of the poet since 1250. So the story goes, Carlo Malatesta did not approve of such pagan festivities and when the statue disappeared he was accused of tampering with it. According to Amadei (op.cit., vol.1. pp. 723-724), this made Carlo very unpopular. Equicola (p.60), goes into great detail over this episode. See also Vergerio, in R.I.S., vol.XVI, col.215. and Volta, op.cit., p.93. See also Maffei, Annali di Mantova, p.749. There is nothing to prove (or disprove) the authenticity of this story. There is today a statue in honour of Virgil in the Piazza Broletto.
42. Arch.Gon.B.2038 (Gridario) fasc. 3 (1407-1437), for 24 March 1407.
43. Arch.Gon.B.2038, 26 March 1407.

44. Arch.Gon.Lib. Decr.vol.1, fol. 23.
45. Arch.Gon.B.43 (treaties) fol.59, The League, dated 22 February 1407, is described as being of 'perpetuo durationem'
46. After the death of Niccolò's first wife (Gigliola di Francesco da Carrara) he married Parisina di Malatesta in 1418. She was beheaded for adultery in 1425. His son Leonello married Margherita Gonzaga. Gianfrancesco's daughter. In 1438 Leonello was a firm supporter of Gianfrancesco even though his father was placed in a very ambiguous diplomatic position, having been virtually forced into a firm alliance with Venice.
47. Arch.Gon. B. 43, fol.61.
48. Arch.Gon.B.43, fol.62 ".... cum consensu et auctoritate....domini potestatis Mantue."
49. Gianfrancesco's procurators were Giovanni de Milis and Bartolomeo de Crema. (Arch.Gon. B.43, fol.62). However, there was a proviso for an increase in the number of lances if "utrique dictarum partium viderent necessarius". The small numbers were after all only intended for purely defensive purposes.
50. The discussions on this point are in S.S. reg.3, fol.70 (26 July 1407).
51. For details see Delayto, "Annalese Estenses", R.I.S. vol.XVIII, col.1054.
52. At this time Carlo was gradually stepping into the shoes of Jacopo dal Verme (who later joined the Venetian forces in the campaigns against the Turks). In fact, the whole affair of Ottobuono Terzi is more valuable for what it indicates of the state of affairs of diplomatic relations between Venice and Mantua.
53. See Tarducci, op.cit.,p.319. The letter, the original of which is in Arch.Gon. B.2185, is printed in the appendix to the article.
54. "Annales Estenses", col.1065. The assassins were never really discovered. There seems to have been very little attempt made to find out who was responsible.
55. Platina, op.cit.,p.796. There appears to have been some debate among the chroniclers about the correct date of this acquisition. Nerli, "Cronaca", R.I.S. vol. XXIV col.1082, gives the year 1408. Amadei (op.cit.,p.727). also mentions 1408 but even if, as Tarducci suggests (p.320), the inhabitants of Bozzolo were prepared to go over to Gianfrancesco when they heard of the league, the official transfer can only have occurred after Terzi's death. There is nothing in the Arch.Gon. for this acquisition, though it is referred to in later documents.
56. No doubt the influence of Margherita Malatesta was great here. See Possevino, op.cit.,p.497.
57. There were two branches of the Malatesta family at Pesaro and Rimini. The principal branch was Rimini to whom Carlo belonged. His two younger brothers Pandolfo (Fano and Brescia) and Malatesta (Cesena) were also celebrated condottieri. Paola Agnese belonged to the Pesaro branch of the family and her mother was Elisabetta Varano of Camerino. See Arch. Gon. B.197, fol.126.

58. Aliprandi, op.cit.,p.169, ll.12657-9, says "Gran zente avian a lor diffesse,/ per capitano da Peser Malatesta/ sazo e ardito, piacente e cortese."
59. Arch.Gon.B.197, fols.126-129, "... major quarto decem annorum, minor viginti quinque." See also Tarducci,op.cit.,p.322.
60. See Tarducci.op.cit.,p.324. and "Diario Ferrarese", R.I.S. vol.XXIV col.174.
61. Arch.Gon.B.2185 (Minute della Cancelleria Mantovana) in a copy of Paola's letter to her agent Scevo in Pesaro: "... Nui Fossemo sposata adi XXII de agosto 1409..."
62. Arch.Gon.B.197 (Affari della Famiglia Gonzaga), fols.126-129. "... recolende memorie Mag.ci. et.Ex.si Dni.Dno.Fr.de Gon." is a reference to the marriage having been arranged by him.
63. Amadei, Cronaca Universale, cit,vol.1.pp.720-721.
64. See Tarducci,op.cit.,appendix no.9. Also Arch.Gon.B.197, fol.131,dated 23 April 1410: "... Solutio facta per procuratorem D.Malatesta dei Malatesta de ducati 5,000 auri."
65. Arch.Gon.B.197, fols.134-140. (See especially fol.138.)
66. See Tarducci,op.cit.,pp.322-3. for this point.
67. There is a small collection of Malatesta's verse in Ateneo Veneto,ser.18. vol.1. (Venezia 1894). See in particular the verses entitled "Domine exaudi orationem."
68. For the text see A.S.I. IV,1843,99 p.444.
69. E.g. Maffei, Annali di Mantova,cit,p.749. "..... saggia pudica, litterata, religiosissima." This is echoed by Aliprandi, op.cit.,p.170,ll.12762-4. "Honesta, gratiosa e cortese,/ da lei zaschun bone risposta avia,/ li sue virtù a ugnun eran palese."
70. Arch.Gon.D.XII.6.
71. Arch.Gon.Libr.Decr.vol.1, fol.105t. for 6 January 1410: "..... propter solemnes festivitates nupciarum celebrandum... non reddatur ins... in aliquibus questionibus civilibus criminalibus..."
72. Platina, op.cit.,p.294. "Ad has nuptas, quae regio sumptu ac magno apparatu sunt instructae, convenere undique ex Flaminia Principes, et Civitatum Hetruriae, quae rerum potiebantur, legati missi. Affuit et Nicolaus Ferrariensis Marchio; affuere Legati Veneti, que comiter et benigne hospitio suscepti, celebratis muneribus donati, donos quique suas abeuntes, liberalitate clementia, Joannem Franciscum in caelum laudibus ferebant, affirmantes, magnae spei adolescentem dignari se ac familia sua uxorem duxisse." Equicola (p.138), indicates that there were representatives from all the most powerful states in Italy. See also Aliprandi (op.cit.,p.170, ll.12777/8). "Cum secho (i.e. Malatesta Malatesta) menon si bella brigata/ de notabeli de gran zentileza/ ugni gran donna ne seria honorata."

73. See Tarducci, op.cit., appendix no.8.
74. A.S.V. Sen. Misti vol.48, fol.42.
75. Aliprandi, op.cit.,p.170, ll 12795.
76. There are a number of accounts of this. See Equicola, p.138, Possevino, p.497, and Volta, p.94.
77. E.G. Equicola (p.136) refers to "quella opulenza, quelle ricchezze da suoi maggiori con tanto pericolo acquistate."
78. For a discussion of this see Chapter 3.
79. Tarducci,op.cit.,appendix no.8.
80. See Tarducci,op.cit.,pp.334ff. for the background to this. The original family was wealthy and powerful. They were invested with the territories of Prato by Lewis of Bavaria on 14 August 1329 in reward for faithful services. They were subsequently rewarded by Charles IV and received Prato itself from Wenceslaus in 1366.
81. Arch.Gon. Lib. Decr.vol.1.,fol.121. Carlo Albertini's father Francesco is mentioned as having been in the service of Luigi II.
82. Arch.Gon.Lib. Statut. vol.XIII, fol.217.
83. Ibid. "... idem Mag.us miles dnus Carolus parem nobiscum habeat potestatem per totum assentie nostre tempus."
84. Ibid. ".... nostra civitate Mantue onmibusque terris nostro dominio suppositis."
85. Arch.Gon. Lib. Decr. vol. II, fol.117: "gn.ali capitan.nro."
86. Arch.Gon. Lib.Decr.vol.1, fols 128t - 130t.
87. Arch.Gon.Lib.Decr. vol. 1, fol.128r. He was able to dispose of the property as he wished and it could not be interfered with "ullo unque tempore non imponere nec in alique violare."
88. Arch.Gon.Lib.Decr.vol.II, fols.191-191 dated 21 Nov.1412. This is the only recorded bequest to Ludovico.
89. Arch.Gon.Lib.Decr. vol.I, fols 135v-136r concerning: "donationem liberam et possessione territorio et terris pellalochi cum pertinentis iuribus et iurisdictionibus suis omnibus, ac perinde ymunitates, prorogativas exemptiones et libertates suis colonis, et laboratoribus concessisse...."
90. Arch.Gon. Lib. Decr. vol I, fol.131.
91. Arch.Gon.Lib.Decr. vol. I, fol.131: "... attentis quoque servitiis p.q. Magnificum militem dnum, genitorum suum recollende memorie q.magnifico dno.Ludovico avo nro...." Reference is also made to the services which Carlo himself rendered to Francesco Gonzaga.
92. Arch.Gon.Lib.Decr.vol.I, fol.136r. In 1412 Stefano was made Podestà of Mantua.

93. Very soon the treasurer of Mantua Benvenuto de' Pegorini was associated with the Albertini. See Arch.Gon.Lib.Decr.vol.II, fol.30, for 30 June 1411. He was arrested along with the Albertini in 1414.
94. Tarducci (p.338) argues that 1411/1412 sees the real beginning of Albertini ambitions. It would be more reasonable to assume, in the light of the documentary evidence cited above, that the ambitions were there as early as 1410. Once there was a territorial basis for power, they were able to begin to impose their own policies upon Mantua.
95. Arch.Gon.Lib. Decr.vol.II, fols.207-208.
96. Arch.Gon.Lib. Decr.vol.II, fols. 220-221; ".... damus et concedimus prefati comiti Stefano potestatem bailium et generalem ac specialem ac liberam facultatem omnis et singulis apellacionum declamacionum et supplicacionum causas quas ad nos tam de iure civitati quam ex forma statutorum nre. civitatis Mantuanus....."
97. See Tarducci, op.cit.,p.338,note 3.
98. Arch.Gon.Lib. Decr. vol.II, fols.70-71. Pandolfo's bequest is described as a "liberam donationem..... cum mero et misto imperio ac gladii potestatem." It is also a "donationem irrevocabilem."
99. Arch.Gon.Lib. Decr.vol.II, fol.71. "Absolvero nos a provsione prefatum q. magnificum dominum genitorem nostram facta super demolitionem fortilici predicti cum promissionem eidem dno. Carlo p.nos facta q. si p.dicta ipse dns. Carlum et heredes suos de reliqua parte d.cti fortilicii sita super nr. territorio mantuano et de pertinentiis suis...."
100. Ibid. ".... et ipm. fortilicium et territorium.... totaliter speravimus a civitatem et iurisdictionem..... nr. Mant."
101. Arch.Gon. Lib.Statut. Bk.XIII, no.27. There were two further renewals in 1412 on 30 April and 31 July in order to cover short absences by Gianfrancesco in Rimini. See Arch.Gon.Lib.Decr.vol.II, fols 121 and 151. respectively.
102. Arch.Gon.Lib. Decr.vol.II, fols. 276-277.
103. S.S.reg.4, fol.122, 29 May 1410: ".... nam ad hoc continue vigillavimus et vigillamus sincera mente..."
104. Sanuto, op.cit., col.861.
105. Tarducci, op.cit.p.340. "Egli era sui primi passi dell' adolescenza, e come tutti quelli della sua età doveva essere sovrabbondante di vita, intollerante di freno, smanioso di libertà."
106. See Tarducci, op.cit.,pp.341-342 & ff.
107. The title conferred by Wencelaus upon Francesco in 1403 was invalidated after his deposition by the imperial electors.



108. Arch.Gon.B.43 fol.71 13 April 1413; Albertini's treaty with the Austrian Princes. This will be discussed in due course.
109. Arch.Gon. 3452. (papers relating to the interrogation and trial of the Albertini and their accomplices). The pages, unfortunately, are not numbered.
110. Tarducci, op.cit., pp.342 ff. I have largely used the same extracts.
111. Coniglio, op.cit., p.447. This was especially true after Carlo Malatesta's troops had inflicted a heavy defeat on Sigismund on 9 August 1412.
112. Gaspare had been Provincial of his order in 1400 and was nominated as an imperial adviser in 1413. Although he was arrested along with the other conspirators in 1414 he appears to have survived. Tarducci, op.cit. p.343, mentions that he was still living in 1444 in the Convent of Cividale di Friuli. Both the executive nature of his task and his valuable evidence obviously inclined Gianfrancesco to mercy as far as he was concerned.
113. Arch.Gon.B.3452.
114. Ibid., Gaspare says "... quod ipse (Carlo) tamquam principalis consiliarius et rector domini consulebat et inducebat dominum ad fidelitatem imperi."
115. Ibid., "... potius deberet Venetis suas gentes mutuare et mittere quam se discoperire quovis modo."
116. Ibid., Carlo's instructions to Gaspare: "... dixit.... bonum esset quod dominus meus sit primus qui mittat ad eum."
117. Apparently Gaspare had considerable difficulties in reaching the Emperor because the presence of Venetian troops in Friuli required him to make a detour.
118. Ibid., "infra XXV dies."
119. Tarducci, op.cit., p.347.
120. In which Sigismund offered to include Mantua.
121. Sigismund wished to defer the granting of this until after his coronation.
122. "... promisit imperatori dare comiti Bertoldo quinque millia et quingentos ducatos quum veniret Mantuam cum gentibus suis." (Ibid.)
123. Arch.Gon. B. 43, fol.70. The number of galleys is not stipulated. Fondulo's obligation was to supply "... quadringentos (cavalry) ita tam q.loco equestrium centum possit tenere tot pedites sufficient loco dictorum equestrium."
124. Gaspare's narration states "ave resonamento miser Carlo cum lor frateri".

125. Arch.Gon.B.43 fol.71; "legam confederationem et unionem ducibus Austrie". Gianfrancesco signs personally "ad maiorem firmitatem".
126. Coniglio (op.cit.,p.448). states: "... nulla vieta di credere che lo facesse con l'approvazione del Malatesta e della stessa Venezia, la quale in quegli anni spingeva la prudenza fino a rifiutare l'alleanza con Ladislao."
127. See Tarducci, p.350.
128. He acquitted himself so well that he was given a palace on the Grand Canal near San Stae. It was valued at 6,000 ducats. See M.Mallett, Mercenaries and their Masters (London,1974),p.93.
129. Tarducci,p.353. It is true that the Imperial tribute of 5,000 ducats was not paid. This was one of the things which Sigismund complained of.
130. Gaspare spent some time in Cremona en route trying to pacify Cabrino. He had also been imprisoned twice on his way possibly by Pandolfo's men.
131. Platina, op.cit.p.295.
132. At the same time he was conducting a vigorous campaign against the Romagnol tyrants. For a more detailed discussion see Partner, The Papal State under Martin VIII,cit.pp.20 ff.
133. According to the "Diario Ferrarese", R.I.S. vol. XXIV, Luigi had been John's lieutenant in 1411. See Tarducci,p.356.
134. Arch.Gon. B.51 (Condotte). There seems to have been little doubt that Luigi was, in fact, Carlo's brother. He was indicted along with the others in 1414.
135. Nerli, op.cit., col.1082.
136. Platina, p.295: "Is Mantuam iter faciens, ingenium et magnitudinem animi Johannis Francisci admiratus, adolescentem copiarum suarum Ducem delegit, Francisco Prato adjuvante, qui multi ante annis ordines ductaverat...."
137. Arch.Gon. B.51: ".... precedenti conducta... anno Domini MCCCC tertio decimo, die ultima mensis augusti..."
138. It was also suggested by Tarducci (p.137) that John XXIII was more likely to pay Gianfrancesco than Sigismund whose financial record was extremely poor.
139. One to the Pope and one to Luigi. This is indicated in Gaspare's relation in the trial papers.
140. These figures are mentioned in the renewal of 1414. See above note 118.
141. Maffei, op.cit.,p.750 states: "... onde per soccorrere Bologna il Pontefice Giovanni, non già considerando in Gianfrancesco i biondi capelli, ma il semmo canuto, e la senile virtù, lo dichiarò capo e generale delle sue armi." See also Platina, De Vitis Pontif.John XXIII.

142. This was not stated in Gaspare's testimony and referred to the meeting between John XXIII and Sigismund at Lodi. The Pope is reported to have stated: "ego volo dominum Mantue pro me ut veniat mecum." Hence the renewal of the condotta on 19 February 1414 signed just after John's departure from Mantua on 15 February.
143. Amadei, op.cit.p.711. Both Ladislas and, to a lesser extent, Carlo Malatesta were annoyed at being thwarted by one so young.
144. See Tarducci, p.358, and the "Cronaca di Bologna", R.I.S. vol.XVIII col.603.
145. Volta, op.cit.,p.96. states that there was a suggestion that Sigismund may himself have come to Mantua at this time, but there is no proof. An event of such importance would not have passed without mention.
146. Volta, op.cit.,p.97. See J. 'Donesmondi, Storia Ecclesiastica di Mantova (Mantua,1613) Bk.V. re. this visit.
147. Before the investiture (Arch.Gon.B.X.5) theseland's had been rented from the monks of S.Zenone for an annual rent of 404 "mine" of grain. The monks cannot have been too happy about John XXIII giving away their property in such a cavalier fashion.
148. See Tarducci,p.360.
149. Arch.Gon.B.3452. (Trial papers): "volle (i.e. Sigismund) chel magn. et excel. nostro signore vada tute le soe zente a hostiano."
150. Ibid.
151. Carlo proposed a direct meeting between Gianfrancesco and Sigismund either at Canneto or Ostiano. (Pegorini's deposition in the trial papers).
152. Carlo himself states in the trial papers that John was willing to send help with 300 lances and money to secure this. This is supported by Pegorini's testimony.
153. Pegorini's deposition. Carlo was violently opposed to this.
154. He is said to have had a special bodyguard from Prato itself. (Tarducci, p.36.)
155. Tarducci, p.36, note 2.
156. Pegorini's deposition.
157. This date is furnished by Nerli, op.cit.,col.1082. Other sources erroneously quote 1414. This is borne out by Ludovico's subsequent letters.
158. Tarducci,p.37.
159. At the same time Pegorini relates that Gianfrancesco demanded to see the accounts for the previous six months. (i.e. starting from the previous October). This could well have been at Paola's suggestion.

160. Platina concurs: "Paola uxore nobilissima ac magni animi matrona ad id adhortante" (p.299). See also Aliprandi, cap.190.
161. These were (a) the four Albertini; (b) Antonio de Lanfranchi and his two sons Panfilo and Agabito. Antonio was Carlo Albertinis' father in law; (c) Crescimbeno de Castelbarco, who was "fattore delle rendite camerali"; (d) Martino and Benvenuto de Pegorini; (e) Bartolomeo de Bozo, Francesco Malumbra and Bertone di Vigevano "cavalieri del podestà"; (f) Gabriel de Faraone; (g) Azzone, Prior of S.Lucia; (h) Gaspare, although he is not mentioned in the 'grido' of 28 March. He himself stated that he had been arrested.
162. Tarducci (pp.40-46) goes into some detail over the sufferings of the Albertini; there seems little point in reproducing it here.
163. Arch.Gon. B.2038 (Gridario): "... zascheduno persona... la quala aveso per tempopasado, dado alcuni denari o altra roba ad alcuno de li (conspirators).... debia infra 2 dì.... che dia venire avir denunciado e dado in scritto alo prefato Mag.Nro.Sig...."
164. Arch.Gon. B. 2038 for 14 April 1414.
165. Arch.Gon. B.2038 for 16 and 18 April 1414. It was specifically stated that all known friends of the Albertini would have all favours revoked.
166. Tarducci mentions that the personal effects and furniture of the Albertini were re-used in the Gonzaga palace (p.46). Aliprandi says; "E nota che, senza alchun falare/ lo Signore la roba a tuti si tolia/ benehé sua era di gran valor se extimare/ chose, possessione, dinari, e mobilia." (p.180, ll.13738-41).
167. Sanuto (op.cit., col.888) mentions: "fu omorato". Due deference was given to his rank, but that appears to have been all.
168. Arch.Gon. B. 2038, fasc.3 for 2 April 1414.
169. S.S. reg. 6, fol.28.
170. The Albertini were replaced in the government of the city by Paolo Gorni, Guilio Boccamaggiore, Pietro Pusterla and Claudio Albrigio (Amadei,op.cit. p.735). However, their powers were severely circumscribed.
171. Arch.Gon. B. 2038, fasc. 3, fol. 8t. 10 May 1419: "... zaschuno citadino el qual sia over da mò inanzi serà del dito consegio mazore, debia andare a stare a quello quanti fiadi fira convocado...soto la pena predita de ducati doi doro, da fir scasa senza remisione de zaschuno chi non se vegnira e per zaschuna volta." See Tarducci, op.cit.,p.62.
172. Arch.Gon. Libr. Statut. rubr. 36, c.221,19 March 1416.
173. Tarducci (p.61) cites a document in Arch.Gon. B. 2094 written by Gianfrancesco from Goito on 25 August 1418 which suggests that she is already playing this role: "Paula, per Dio tenete ogni bon modo che ne sia possibele de retrovar quelli dinari, perché, como più cé aguardo sovra, tanti più ne pae che i siamo de bixogno, e quando i ne mancazeno, i seria el più impaciado omo del mondo."

174. Sanuto, cols.894-5.
175. e.g. Platina, p.300, and Equicola, p.139. Also Amadei, p.738.
176. A. Parazzi, Origini e Vicende di Viadana (Viadana, Remigi 1893), vol.1, ch.xx p.138. He says: "ei venne come per far una passeggiata militare." See also Tarducci, p.49 and Platina, pp.300-301.
177. Platina (p.300) says they went over voluntarily. Equicola (p.139) opts for conquest.
178. Arch.Gon.B.3386. Parazzi, pp.141-4, in which he prints the full text of the agreement.
179. According to Tarducci (p.49) Gianfrancesco formally took possession on the 18 July 1415. The agreement was renewed on 14 Feb.1416. (Arch. Gon. B. 3386). There is a full discussion of the terms by Tarducci on pp.49-51.
180. For the background to this see P.Partner, The Papal State under Martin V, cit. p.36. For a purely military assessment of his career see M.Mallett, Mercenaries and their Masters, cit pp.71-2, Also P.Jones, The Malatesta of Rimini (Cambridge, 1974), pp.144-8.
181. G.A.Campanus, "Vita Brachii", R.I.S., vol.xix. cols. 93-103. Orsini apparently was not present at this battle. See also "Chronicon Eugubrium", R.I.S. vol.xxi, col.958.
182. In league with the Archbishop of Ragusa. See Partner, op.cit.,p.37.
183. Platina, p.301: "Mantuam rediens... lectissimorum equitum ac peditum centurias aliquot et cohortes scribit, quibus sequenti anno militiam et auspicias Malatestae, inclyti ea tempestate Ducis secutus, cum Bracchium ex agro Piceno pellere conaretur, virtutis et probitatis magna indicia prae se tulit...."
184. Equicola, p.140.
185. Amadei, p.738.
186. Platina, p.301: "Perductus deinde post sanatum vulnus in concionem militum, ac militaribus muneribus, thorace, equo, ense, donatur."
187. C.d'Arco, Dei Dominatori Gonzaga, op.cit., vol.4, p.22.
188. Carlo and Galeazzo were released in June of 1417 judging from an entry in the 'Registro delle Spese' cited by Tarducci on p.55, note 1, which records Paola buying some blue velvet cloth "pro nunciamento relaxationis magnifici domini Caroli et Galeaz. de Malatestis".
189. Tarducci, p.57.
190. Arch.Gon. B. 2038 fasc. 3 Entries for 20 and 24 respectively. All this was to be supervised by the Bishop of Mantua.

191. Ibid. "... farà residentia ne la dita citade per quello tempo che parerà ala sua sanctitade..." Tarducci (p.58) also mentions references to chairs specially for the houses in which the papal court was to reside (note 2.)
192. Arch.Gon. B. 389, 7 Oct.1418: "Capitula pape Martini V cum Illus, dno. Mantuano."
193. Ibid., ".... celerum et expedientam iusticiam in civilibus et criminalibus.."
194. Ibid.,
195. Partner, p.46; Nerli, col. 1084, states 29 Oct.
196. For a fuller discussion of this see Partner, pp.46ff.
197. Platina, p.303.
198. Tarducci, pp.59-60.and Platina, p.302.
199. Amadei, p.743. F. Alessio, in Storia di S.Bernardino da Siena e del suo Tempo (Mondovi, Graziano 1898), ch.15.
200. Amadei, p.744.
201. For a fuller picture of this see Donesmondi, Dell'Istoria Ecclesiastica di Mantova, cit. pp.349-379.
202. See "Vittorino da Feltre" in Quaderni del Paedagogium (Brescia, 1947), especially the essay by Giovanni Calò (pp.3-32). There is very little documentary material relating to Vittorino in the Mantuan Archive. See below chapter 6.
203. Tarducci, p.65. See also A.Bertolotti "Le Arti Minori alla Corte di Mantova nei secoli XV, XVI e XVII". A.S.L. pp.259 ff. 1888. P.Girolla, Pittori e minatori a Mantova sulla fine del '300 e sul principio del '400 (Mantua 1921), and E.Marani and C.Perina, in Mantova - Le Arti, vol.ii (Mantua 1961).
204. Arch.Gon. B. 2038, fasc. 3, fol.10t, 12 Oct.1420. ".... lo qual vegnirà... ad habitare in la citade de Mantoa continuamente debia avere de provigione dal Comune de Mantoa mezo ducato al mese doro per lo fitto de la stazione o sia dela casa.... e duri la provisione fino a cinque any proximi che de vegnire."

CHAPTER 3

GIANFRANCESCO GONZAGA AND THE FIRST PHASE OF THE LOMBARD  
WARS (1420-1432)

CHAPTER 3GIANFRANCESCO GONZAGA AND THE FIRST PHASE OF THE LOMBARD  
WARS (1420-1432)IIntroduction

"Siamo ora ad un gran fuoco, fuoco acceso nel presente anno  
in Lombardia contro di Filippo Maria duca di Milano dai  
Veneziani e Fiorentini collegati ai di lui danno."

This is how Muratori introduced the year 1426 in his "Annali d'Italia". <sup>1/</sup>  
The words "gran fuoco" seem to be particularly appropriate in describing  
this first really major conflict between two large territorial states  
in Northern Italy, a conflict which was to dominate the rest of Gianfrancesco's  
life and in which the security and very existence of his state were to be  
bound up. It is all too easy to view the Lombard Wars as a struggle which  
exclusively concerned Milan and Venice, and, to a lesser extent, Savoy and  
Florence; and all too easy to play down the role which the smaller states  
such as Mantua and Ferrara played. This omission is particularly serious  
as far as Mantua is concerned, because in a very real sense it was to be  
the focal point of the conflict, at least until the second half of the  
1430's, and Venetian and Milanese policies were geared very much to the  
particular conditions which operated in Mantua and the Mantovano. Indeed,  
if we view the Lombard Wars in these years from the perspective of Mantua  
it is possible to clarify still further the all-important relationship  
with Venice which was to be the controlling factor until 1438. In  
addition to this it will also serve to offer an interpretation of the  
relationship between the Venetian Senate and Carmagnola, a relationship  
which was to have considerable repercussions on Gianfrancesco's own  
military career, and which illustrates very clearly the motives behind  
what the Venetians considered an increasingly crucial relationship between



state and military commander. This became of even greater immediate relevance when Venetian policy gradually changed from defence to expansion.

Although Gianfrancesco did not assume overall command of the Venetian army until 1432 when Carmagnola was suddenly arrested and executed in circumstances which, as we shall see, were profoundly disturbing to Gianfrancesco; scholars have tended to underestimate both the esteem in which he was held in Venice and the importance of the role in his opening phase of the Lombard Wars. This chapter aims, in part, to redress this imbalance by examining closely the issues which affected Mantua in the period of diplomatic tension which immediately preceded the war, the motives which conditioned Gianfrancesco's relations with the Venetian Senate and *vice versa*, and finally to analyse the precise role which Mantua and Gianfrancesco were to play in the overall tactics and strategy of this period of the war.

## II

### Mantua and the Build-up of Tension in Lombardy

At the outset it would be useful to reiterate some of the most important achievements which resulted from the early years which were considered in the previous chapter. They were basically four-fold. The first and most obvious result was that Gianfrancesco's authority within Mantua itself had a secure basis after the threat of the Albertini ascendancy had been overcome. Secondly, his albeit limited military experience, first in Bologna fighting for Pope John XXIII and subsequently in the Romagna in the wars against Braccio da Montone, had established him in the eyes of both Venice and Milan as a soldier of considerable merit and potential. Thirdly, the visits of the two Popes John XXIII and

Martin V, his patronage of Vittorino da Feltre and his interest in the Church had put Mantua on the map as a cultural and diplomatic centre. Lastly, perhaps the most important factor had been the very strong relationship which had been built up with Venice in the period after the Albertini crisis. It was a relationship which, as we have seen, could provide the vital protection which a state like Mantua needed and which had a strong historical tradition behind it. The Albertini crisis could easily have damaged this relationship, but the redeeming factor as far as the circumspect Venetian Senate was concerned was the fact that it had occurred at a time when Gianfrancesco was not fully in control. On the contrary, the eagerness of Gianfrancesco to restore good relations with Venice after the Albertini were arrested made the Senate anxious to strengthen its ties with Mantua still further if only to prevent a similar situation from occurring again in the future.

Even if there tended to be a strong 'paternalistic' streak in this relationship, it also served a very important political purpose. The truth of the matter was that even as early as 1421 Venice was coming increasingly to see the importance of maintaining satellite states for protective purposes. The occupation of Verona and the need to protect Friuli now made the Venetians very much more concerned about the Adige frontier. It was not until 1425 that we see the first manifestation of this *vis-a-vis* Mantua, but even before the expansion of Milanese power under Filippo Maria Visconti was to threaten Venice directly, the Senate was clearly anxious to monitor any developments very carefully indeed, and Mantua could be very useful as a 'listening post'. For instance, on 19 April 1422 there is a somewhat enigmatic letter from Niccolò Loredan in Verona to Gianfrancesco. Although the exact context of the letter is not absolutely clear, it would appear that Niccolò was very anxious for Gianfrancesco to relay any important news of developments in Lombardy to him. 2

Much has been made of the cautious reaction of the Venetian Senate and Doge Tomaso Mocenigo to the second wave of Milanese expansion during the period 1412-1424, and especially of the repeated requests by Florence to Venice to join a league to combat this growing menace. In addition to this much has already been written about the change from an isolationist to a more active policy on the *terraferma*. <sup>3/</sup> As far as territorial possessions were concerned, this was not an abrupt development. After all, there had been attempts to intervene on the mainland as early as 1308 at Ferrara and, after the death of Giangaleazzo Visconti, there had been an extension into eastern Lombardy. It could be argued that one of the most important lessons of the War of Chioggia had been the need for a more secure *terraferma*.

The crucial change occurred in the way in which such possessions were regarded; in other words, the change from a basically *retroterra* mentality to a more positive, initially defensive but ultimately possessive *terraferma* mentality. The war against Filippo Maria set the seal upon this attitude but, despite the traditional attitudes of Mocenigo and the Venetian elder statesmen who tried to cling to the isolationist policy based on overseas trade, it was only a matter of time before pressure both of political events and of internal necessities were to force Venice to look alarmingly westwards. <sup>4/</sup> It was a gradual development away from old economic attitudes towards an appreciation of stark political realities. The change is much more gradual than one might suspect; after all, it is arguable that Mocenigo himself had been one of the creators of the *terraferma* state. The caution which the Venetians displayed towards Florentine approaches may well have been in large part because of the economic advantages of a Milanese alliance at a time when the Turkish threat in the east was beginning to cause some concern. It was in the period after 1421 that we see a more definitive change of attitude as far as Mantua is

concerned and this is borne out by Loredan's letter cited above.

However, even though a concern not to jeopardise acquisitions on the mainland made Venice very reluctant about any declaration which was overtly against Filippo Maria, this certainly did not mean that the Senate was in any way careless of what was going on. It was in effect extremely vigilant and, moreover, there were contingency plans in hand which could be put into operation should the military situation deteriorate. Even though the most evident change of direction came after 1422 it is possible to argue that even as early as 1420 it was fully appreciated that Mantua's strategic position was going to be critical. It is certain that the Venetian treaty with Gianfrancesco which was eventually concluded on 14 March 1421 formed part of this plan. <sup>5/</sup> It is interesting and significant to note that apart from Andrea Mocenigo, Francesco Foscari played a very important part in the negotiations which led up to this treaty. On the Mantuan side discussions were conducted by that staunch Gonzaga advocate Donato de' Preti whose legal reputation and experience was very valuable to Gianfrancesco in these years. Ever since 1407 when he had been largely responsible for securing the acceptance of the regency plans had had figured prominently in the government of Mantua. In the circumstances it was not surprising that during these years he was mainly used in a diplomatic capacity. During the build-up to the outbreak of hostilities he occupied the very important post of resident ambassador in Venice, a position which he filled with distinction because not only was he eminently acceptable personally to the Venetians but also because he had worked closely with Foscari himself.

The negotiations over the details of the agreement had been in progress for some four months, since the preceeding December, and the final document gives us an excellent indication of the precise role which Mantua was to play in the overall plan of defence. It was basically an agreement of mutual defence and reiterated the long tradition of friendship between the two states. <sup>6/</sup> In return for Gianfrancesco's loyalty and support Venice undertook once more, as in the past, to take Gianfrancesco and his state *sub umbra sua* and to protect Mantuan territories in every way. In addition to such general promises, however, the treaty imposed a definite plan of military reinforcement. The Venetians and their allies were to be allowed free access to the Mantovano together with supplies and armaments. <sup>7/</sup>

The surviving personal letters of Gianfrancesco leave the distinct impression of a nervous and apprehensive character where the interests of his state were concerned; and, as we shall see, this was especially the case when the Mantovano was likely to be in the forefront of any campaign against such a powerful state as Milan. This made the Venetians very much aware of the need to tread carefully at this initial stage; to proceed by slow but definite stages in obtaining the closest possible commitment from Mantua; and this is one of the most consistent themes during the period covered by this chapter. What the Venetians were trying to do in this treaty was to balance their need for security against the dangers which might accrue from over-alarmed Gianfrancesco at this point. This is borne out by the remaining provisions of the treaty. In particular, it was made clear that Gianfrancesco's own personal commitment was to be restricted only to the defence of his own territories. <sup>8/</sup> However, it was stipulated that in the event of war a sum of two thousand ducats was to be set aside every month for military purposes to be used in whichever

way Gianfrancesco considered appropriate "Per conservazione status". <sup>9/</sup>  
 Any expenditure in excess of this was to be met by Venice. <sup>10/</sup> Finally  
 a penalty for non-observance of ten thousand ducats was fixed "que  
 pena tociens committatur".

There is one overriding conclusion which can be drawn from  
 an examination of this alliance. It was of considerable importance at  
 this time to identify Mantua's interests with those of Venice, and  
 as long as Gianfrancesco could be convinced that this identity existed  
 this would go a long way to contributing towards the unostentatious security  
 which the Venetians aimed at in the early 1420's. It would, therefore,  
 be quite erroneous to conclude that the Venetians were indifferent to  
 Lombard affairs during this period. Even the most committed isolationist  
 could not view the extraordinary progress made by Filippo Maria Visconti  
 at this time with anything other than growing concern.

In the years immediately preceeding 1402 the most phenomenal  
 development had been the extension of the Milanese state under Giangaleazzo  
 Visconti. Imperialistic policies on such a large scale had been  
 previously unknown and such a development was a testament as much to  
 the dynamism of the Milanese as to the very considerable ability of  
 Giangaleazzo himself. It seemed now that Filippo Maria was aiming to  
 repeat this success. This enigmatic and complex man who could be so  
 unpredictable, <sup>11/</sup> was able to recover the momentum which had been lost  
 under his elder brother and he almost immediately devoted himself to the  
 reconstruction of the Milanese state after he assumed power on  
 16 June 1412. <sup>12/</sup>

The remarkable success in these years was due in large part to the military superiority of the Milanese army and to the lack of a concerted effort by those cities facing absorption. The expertise of Carmagnola and his skilful military virtuosity was also a dominant factor. It could well be argued that his work for Filippo Maria represented the years of his most consistent success.<sup>13/</sup> As far as Venice and Florence were concerned the earlier part of this process did not unduly arouse suspicion. It seemed merely as if Filippo Maria was consolidating his authority in the area immediately around Milan itself. Up to 1417 Filippo Maria concerned himself with the absorption of places such as Lodi, Como and Trezzo;<sup>14/</sup> but by this year the Milanese state had already grown quite considerably,<sup>15/</sup> and any further development was liable to have greater repercussions. Any further lateral expansion would bring him to the attention of either Savoy in the west when Vercelli was threatened, or of Venice and Pandolfo Malatesta in the east where Filippo Maria already had designs on Brescia and Bergamo.<sup>16/</sup> In fact, the occupation of Lodi, Como and Trezzo had already provoked a rather half-hearted response from Venice,<sup>17/</sup> but at this stage there was really nothing to deflect Filippo Maria from his purpose. On 17 May 1417 Vercelli was taken and in the same month Carmagnola was launching his forces against the Arcelli of Piacenza and thence across the Po into the Cremonese. Although Carmagnola was not successful at such places as Castellone and Pizzighettone, principally because this was subsidiary to the main effort at Piacenza, it can be seen that Filippo Maria was not only coming into conflict with Pandolfo Malatesta and his allies, Paola's family, but he was getting more and more uncomfortably close to the areas bordering on the Mantovano. What is more, Sigismund's diploma of February 1418 confirming Filippo Maria in the possessions which he had already acquired and of those remaining territories in the

Milanese Patrimony which he was yet to acquire, only seemed to give his actions an even greater appearance of legality and consequently fired his ambitions still further. <sup>18/</sup>

The years 1419 and 1420 were ones of startling success for Milanese fortunes. Despite Martin V's attempts to calm the situation during his stay at Mantua the negotiations, which were entrusted to the ducal secretary Giovanni Corvino d'Arezzo, seemed in reality only an attempt to gain time. <sup>19/</sup> This was definitely proved by Filippo Maria's brazen campaigns and conquest of Bergamo and Cremona barely before the ink on Martin V's adjudication was dry. <sup>20/</sup>

It is clear that Filippo Maria appreciated the dangers inherent in these policies and this was the reasoning behind the treaties with Florence on 8 February 1420 and the negotiations with Venice in the following June. Filippo Maria was very anxious to underline the basic legitimacy of his actions and declared that his sole aim was to keep Milanese territories "intra fines Lombardiae, Marchiae Trevisanae, Marchionatus Montisferrati, Provinciae Pedemontanae." The occupation of Parma on 13 November 1420 and Brescia on 16 March 1421 technically should have brought the Milanese state to the limits fixed by the agreements with Florence and Venice. However, despite this agreement, the miserable fate of Pandolfo Malatesta, even though an indemnity of 34,000 golden florins had been paid to him, did affect the official peace between Milan and Venice. <sup>21/</sup> For instance, when Filippo Maria's troops were engaged against Brescia he tried to get Venice to impede some troops which Carlo Malatesta had raised for his brother in the Romagna from passing through the Veronese. This



was a very difficult situation for Venice because, despite the friendship with Milan, a friendship which by now was fraught with suspicion, they could not seem to be actively working against a family which had served them well in the past and who, moreover, were directly related to Paola, a woman whose strong family loyalties were apparent on a number of occasions. It proved to be more politic to allow these troops, about a thousand strong, to pass through unimpeded. In future it was to become increasingly difficult to keep on harmonious terms with everybody at once.

If we correllate the timing of the Venice/Mantua treaty with the movements of Filippo Maria the motivation behind it becomes even clearer. By the end of 1420 and the beginning of 1421 it was plain to see that Filippo Maria's influence was fast approaching the danger zone on the borders of the Mantovano. This reinforced the two-sided advantages of the relationship between Venice and Mantua. As well as securing the services of a promising soldier it was to give them a state which could cushion the Veneto against any further development while at the same time giving them the possibility of turning Mantua into a strong frontier state by giving them an opportunity to move men in as they saw fit. But, on the other hand, it is worth noting that the treaty itself did not mention Milan as a possible enemy; in no way did it constitute a specifically anti-Viscontean alliance, but it was a good anticipation of what was to follow. In 1421, at least, Venice was trying to keep as much control over the situation as was possible while appearing to keep all its options open. In doing so, Mantua was the obvious centre of

their attention. Had Filippo Maria stopped at this point there was still a possibility of a 'modus vivendi', albeit a delicate one, between the major states.

Unfortunately, Filippo Maria had no intention of keeping his state within the boundaries set by the agreement with Florence and Venice. The recovery of Asti in August 1422<sup>22/</sup> and the conquest of Genoa in the previous March<sup>23/</sup> hinted at much wider reaching plans which, if projected eastwards, would soon turn an uncomfortable neighbour into a vassal state. The relative ease of Carmagnola's successes fed Filippo Maria's ambitions still further. Because Venice had little or no military experience on the mainland, it may well be that Filippo Maria underestimated any resistance which Venice could put up. It was also true that Florence's military record had not been particularly impressive. Nevertheless, Filippo Maria still felt the need to be cautious and this is why in 1422 his policy of expansion temporarily changed direction. A treaty of February 1422 was intended to keep Venice happy while he turned his attention to the Romagna. <sup>24/</sup>

It was this phase of expansion which aroused the fears of Florence more than ever. During this year Visconti influence had reached Bologna and especially Forlì after the death of Giorgio degli Ordelaffi. <sup>25/</sup> Once again, Florence felt that its liberty was seriously threatened and it was this fear which prompted the Signoria to make its appeals to Venice, the only power strong enough to provide any sort of sanction. <sup>26/</sup> Milanese activities in the Romagna were also an affront to Papal power, but, although Martin V was active in prompting a Florence/Venice rapprochement, it suited him for the time being to remain neutral. <sup>27/</sup>

Up to this point Filippo Maria's activities had one common factor: they were almost totally aimed at the elimination of smaller signorie, and

this was to have important repercussions for Gianfrancesco. While it was true that in 1422 Filippo Maria was not directly threatening Mantua, Milanese power in the Cremonese, Bresciano and the Bergamasco put a great deal of pressure on him. There was after all a concentration of Milanese power along almost the whole of his western border. Cognasso probably had the measure of Filippo Maria's intentions when he wrote:

"Occorreva mettere i principi e le comunità di fronte al fatto compiuto ..... I vari Signori limitrofi, i Gonzaga, gli Este, i Palaeologi, i tiranelli di Romagna sarebbero stati guadagnati con lusinghe, con promesse, con minaccie." <sup>28/</sup> Gianfrancesco did not need to be a profound student of history to evaluate the significance of what was going on; the dangers were by now too obvious to be ignored. It was impossible to predict where Filippo Maria would strike next, and his recent actions had patently proved that he did not regard his treaty obligations as binding. There was, after all, a limit to his expansion southwards and the only other feasible direction was eastwards across the Lombard plain. Cremona and Brescia were two centres which could be crucial staging points for a subsequent thrust into the Veneto, and the Mantovano was the only obstacle to this progress. Unaided, Gianfrancesco was certainly in no position to resist the Milanese advance. In particular the area to the immediate east of Brescia, around Lonato and Peschiera on the southern shores of Lake Garda was probably the most delicate and vulnerable point of Mantua's defences. <sup>29/</sup> There was every reason to believe that Gianfrancesco could suffer the same fate as Pandolfo Malatesta. It was when these prognostications became a reality that this very situation dictated the overall strategy of the early phases of the Lombard Wars; and because of the very nature of this strategy Gianfrancesco and Mantua

were at its very centre. This is the stage when the military implications of the buffer state became most evident and the resulting situation imposed upon Gianfrancesco decisions which were not easy to make. By contrast, the decisions facing Venice were altogether much simpler. They were interested at first in using Mantua as a shield to deflect Milanese threats to the Veneto. Gianfrancesco, on the other hand, had the much more immediate problem of the threat to his state's very existence, and whereas Venetian and Mantuan interests were generally complimentary, at least until the 1430's, it was a none too easy task to judge the balance between the two necessities correctly. This always tended to be a further weight on Gianfrancesco's mind in deciding when, and at what point, Venetian 'raison d'état' compromised those factors which involved his personal survival. These considerations, however, were to be more pronounced when, in the 30's, there was a gradual change, and a fundamental one at that, in Venice's conception of Mantua's position in the strategy of the Lombard Wars, when Mantua ceased to be a shield to ward off Milanese expansion and Gianfrancesco himself became a spearhead for Venetian imperialism. These were the general considerations which were to affect Gianfrancesco's attitude to the events of the next eighteen years.

For the time being, at least, Gianfrancesco had his formal agreement with Venice which should have put his mind at rest. However, even a brief survey of his dealings with the Venetian Senate in the period between the signing of the treaty and the election of Francesco Foscari as Doge in 1423 would indicate that Gianfrancesco was viewing Filippo Maria's progress with the utmost apprehension, an apprehension which could easily have jeopardised and embarrassed Venetian relations with Milan.

On 17 August 1421 Donato de' Preti was given instructions to ask for reinforcements to be sent into the Mantovano because he had heard information that the Milanese were intending to turn their attention to his territories. <sup>30/</sup> These were only rumours because there was no concrete evidence that such an event was about to take place and the Senate was content to play the matter down as much as possible. It thanked Donato for relaying the information but asked him to reassure his master that it did not consider that Filippo Maria would break his agreement with Venice, an agreement which included Mantua. However, so as not to give Gianfrancesco the impression that it took its Mantuan responsibilities lightly, it gave him an albeit vague assurance that should anything untoward occur it would make adequate provision.

This assurance seems to have kept Gianfrancesco happy only for a few months because at the beginning of November he went personally to Venice with information he had received from Feltrino da Gonzaga and Andrea da Mantova who had reported back from Milan. His fears for the security of his state were such that he wanted far more definite proposals from Venice and these were matters which could only be sorted out personally. The discussions in Venice revolved around two issues - the fortifications of the borders of the Mantovano, and the contingency plans which should come into operation should Mantua be threatened by the Milanese. <sup>31/</sup>

The Senate considered that a strengthening of fortifications, particularly around the river areas, was a very good idea and that an increased military presence in the frontier region generally would be an advantage if only to put Gianfrancesco's mind at rest. In fact the fortifications were in progress during the following May, although it is interesting to note that the Venetians insisted that the fortifications

and manning of these areas was to be carried out by Mantuans and not by Venetian troops. <sup>32/</sup>

However, as far as contingency plans were concerned, the Senate promised that should necessity demand, the rectors of Verona would be instructed to send a force of 300 cavalry and infantry, but Gianfrancesco was assured that this would not really ever be necessary because it still considered that Filippo Maria would keep to his agreement. <sup>33/</sup> In fact, in the following February it sent word to Gianfrancesco that it had consulted with Visconti over the security of Mantuan interests and he had assured it that there was nothing to fear on this account.

Nevertheless, from 1422 onwards we do see the beginnings of this gradual change of attitude towards Milan by Venice which was noted at the beginning of the chapter and this is extremely well documented in the Senate's dealings with Gianfrancesco. From now on Gianfrancesco was urged to be extremely vigilant and to report back any developments, however small, which would indicate a more aggressive attitude on the part of Milan. <sup>34/</sup>

What the Venetians wanted was a discreet observation; they had no intention of endangering the agreement with Milan as yet; but at the same time there was an appreciation of the need for a greater degree of military readiness. This was an important preoccupation during April and May of 1422.

Yet again Gianfrancesco's fears were aroused. On 16 March 1422 he had sent a letter to the Senate in which he stated that he was convinced that the Mantovano was about to be attacked by Angelo della Pergola. <sup>35/</sup> On this occasion, while it was still anxious to avoid over-hasty action, the Senate was not merely content to give vague assurances that the danger had been overestimated. The reply which it gave to Gianfrancesco included a promise that the Venetian army was about to be increased, <sup>36/</sup> and that it intended to consult closely with him over its organisation and also over who should command it. <sup>37/</sup> In May it was also decided to send an embassy to Gianfrancesco in order to persuade him to take up official service with Venice so that security plans could be more effectively co-ordinated. <sup>38/</sup> On 16th of the same month Venice decided to send Francesco della Siega to Milan to remind him of his treaty obligations and to find out precisely what Filippo Maria's intentions were. A copy of Francesco's commission was sent to Gianfrancesco for reference. <sup>39/</sup> All this occurred at the time when Florence was actively soliciting Venetian help. Although Filippo Maria's replies were favourable to Venice and, for the time being, the Venetians were prepared to accept the situation as it stood, <sup>40/</sup> they were gradually becoming more and more suspicious of Milanese policies and were consequently becoming more and more vigilant even if, for the time being, it was more politic to keep this as low key as possible. It is therefore evident that even before Foscari's assumption of power the position of Mantua was by no means of secondary importance in matters of security.

During the years which immediately preceeded the outbreak of hostilities, it therefore became an important preoccupation to keep Gianfrancesco as happy as possible and this was reinforced by his frequent

visits to Venice. This was even more the case after April 1423 when Foscari was elected as Doge in succession to Tomaso Mocengio. <sup>41/</sup> There had always been a much closer connection between Gianfrancesco and Foscari than there had been with Mocenigo and the fact that a man who had been personally involved with Mantuan affairs now ruled Venice must have been very reassuring for him at a time when Filippo Maria's activities were continuing to cause considerable concern. At the beginning of this year Gianfrancesco had been given another uncomfortable reminder of just how close Milanese power was. The Benzoni of Crema, who at the time were coming under increasing pressure from the Milanese, were forced to flee to Venice, and they stopped at Mantua en route. <sup>42/</sup> On 28 January the Milanese took formal possession of Crema. All this gave added justification of the soundness of Mantuan policy as far as requests for Venetian protection were concerned.

It seems clear that Foscari went to some lengths to reassure Gianfrancesco of the high esteem in which he was held in Venice. For instance, Sanuto writes:

"A' 23 d'aprile (1423) volle far fare il gran consiglio nella Sala Nuova fabbricata. E fu il primo Consiglio dopo la sua creazione. Venne al consiglio il Marchese di Mantova, e fu fatto entrare in elezione, e a requisizione del Doge tolse Procuratore in luogo di Sua Serenità <sup>43/</sup> Ser'Albano Badoero."

Such esteem would obviously tend to have an influence on Mantua's standing with other states. In fact, on more than one occasion Gianfrancesco was asked to be an intermediary with Venice. This was the case on one significant occasion even before Foscari became Doge. In March 1422,



even before Milanese successes in the Romagna, the Florentines petitioned Gianfrancesco to persuade Mocenigo to break off the alliance with the Milanese. <sup>44/</sup> Such approaches, while illustrating the influence which other states believed Gianfrancesco to have with Venice, nevertheless tended to place him in rather a compromising position. Until 1426 Gianfrancesco was anxious to keep as low a diplomatic profile as possible. In other words, while being anxious for protection, it was never his intention to draw attention to himself as a war-monger; a fact which would unnecessarily exacerbate his own position *vis-a-vis* Milan. This was a position which became increasingly difficult to maintain and this whole question of his attitude to the war will be discussed at a later point in this chapter.

The Florentines, however, were very tenacious in their attempts to form an anti-Viscontean league because the Milanese occupation of Imola and Forlì was a direct threat to Florence. By the middle of 1423 the prospects of a military campaign against Filippo Maria were gradually becoming a reality, <sup>45/</sup> and the Florentines were consequently more insistent than ever despite Filippo Maria's constant assurances. <sup>46/</sup> Not only were they directing their attention towards Venice, but also towards Savoy. <sup>47/</sup> Unfortunately Amedeo VIII was to play an ambiguous part in the conflict when it finally came about with his 'slow' diplomacy, and however trying this must have been both for Milan and Florence, his actions were very astute indeed. Amedeo, realising the use he could be to both sides, was always to remain sufficiently detached from either side to gain maximum personal benefit from the conflict. However, there was no denying that Savoy was alarmed at Milanese power in the Piedmontese sector and would have welcomed any diminution of it if it were at all possible.

However, if there was any real turning point in the attitude of Venice towards Filippo Maria, it most certainly must have come after the Florentine defeats at Ponte a Ronco (6 September 1423) and, more especially, Zagonara (28 July, 1424) which was yet further proof of the true extent of Milanese policies and also a patent illustration of Florentine military insufficiency. <sup>48/</sup>

The battle of Zagonara sent shock waves throughout Lombardy and increased Gianfrancesco's apprehensions considerably and there are a number of indications that as early as this he was beginning to worry about the apparent indifference of the Venetians to these events. Both Pandolfo and Carlo Malatesta had been involved at Zagonara <sup>49/</sup> and Gianfrancesco needed to reassure himself that the Venetians were still conscious of his need for security. In November 1424, the same month that Palla Strozzi and Giovanni de' Medici were in Venice pursuing their unrelenting efforts to gain the Venetian alliance, Gianfrancesco felt sufficiently alarmed to go personally to Venice to voice his fears of an impending Milanese offensive. <sup>50/</sup> Although there is no evidence to suggest that Gianfrancesco was actively encouraging a warlike attitude from the Venetians, he was definitely in favour of continuing negotiations with Milan to see if the danger could be averted in this way. <sup>51/</sup> In fact, during the period from 1423 to 1425 there was a considerable amount of diplomatic activity between Venice and Milan and it would be true to say that Mantuan interests once again were not neglected. For instance, in January 1425 Andrea Mocenigo was sent to Milan to obtain from Filippo Maria, among other things, assurances (for what they were worth) that the Mantovano would not be threatened. The interests of both Ferrara and Pandolfo Malatesta also formed part of this mission. <sup>52/</sup>

However, the vigilance which the Venetians had encouraged in Gianfrancesco was completely justified by the sudden defection of Carmagnola in February 1425. <sup>53/</sup> This event undeniably played a very important part in the eventual conclusion of the league with Florence, but the inside information Carmagnola was able to furnish about the true extent of Milanese policies only really seemed to confirm intelligence received from Mantua and Ferrara. It was from February onwards that the Venetians began to deal more seriously with Florence when they gradually became aware of the real and growing threat which was posed to the Veneto should Filippo Maria pursue his policy of aggrandisement in Tuscany and the Romagna. <sup>54/</sup> It was true that the presence of Carmagnola in Venice was a considerable advantage to them and a considerable embarrassment to Milan. However, it is important to note that the significance of this event has been somewhat overestimated. Carmagnola's intelligence did not bring about an immediate war; in fact the league with Florence was not signed until 4 December 1425 and Carmagnola was not formally invested as Captain General of the league until 27 January 1426. Throughout the spring and summer of 1425 there were still attempts at mediation with Milan and Venetian ambassadors were also trying, in vain as it turned out, to conclude successful negotiations with the impecunious Sigismund, who in the end found it much more prudent to side with Milan. <sup>55/</sup>

However big a catch Carmagnola was, the Senate was extremely circumspect in its dealings with a person who after all was a deserter. <sup>56/</sup> In fact, as we shall see, the Senate was never to trust Carmagnola as completely as Gianfrancesco in this part of the war. He was useful to them because of his intimate knowledge of Filippo Maria and his military experience and reputation, but very soon after the outbreak of the war

the Senate began to doubt the wisdom of their appointment, and this caused them to look more and more to Gianfrancesco as being the right man to execute their policies. The Senate could never be sure that the wily Filippo Maria might not succeed in wooing Carmagnola back again to his service, <sup>57/</sup> and this was no doubt one of the reasons for his very closely negotiated condotta with Venice. <sup>58/</sup>

For the most part, then, the rest of 1425 was a time of growing tension in which the main states were jockeying for position. In particular, Filippo Maria was busy negotiating with Sigismund and Amedeo at the same time in order to enlist their aid: "Nos autem eis damus bona verba, ut melius possumus, tempus protrahere et dilatare usque ad regii succursus adventum." <sup>59/</sup> Although this remark was written in July 1427 it is equally applicable to the events of 1425.

As far as Gianfrancesco was concerned, this was a period of painstaking vigilance. He was urged to observe the slightest movement in the Bresciano and Cremonese and report back to Venice, and also to ensure the safety of the river communications. For instance, on February 1425 the Senate wrote to Gianfrancesco because they were concerned over the security of their salt ships and he was requested to make adequate preparations for such protection at Brescello and Casalmaggiore. <sup>60/</sup> In fact, one of Gianfrancesco's constant preoccupations in the war as far as his own security was involved, was centred around such areas as Viadana and Guastalla. Guido Torello, lord of Guastalla, was the commander of the Milanese troops in the Romagna. In 1425 he had been involved in Arezzo against the Florentines, particularly in the battles of Anghiari and Faggiuola. Gianfrancesco was continually trying to obtain Guido's services during this period, as we shall see, and in this was to have the active encouragement of the Venetians.

By the end of 1425 matters were very delicately poised and, ultimately, the final decision rested with Foscari and the Senate. The Doge, an ardent supporter of the terraferma policy, certainly had very positive views on Filippo Maria, if we are to believe the speech which Romanin quotes from the "Cronaca Savina". He is reported to have said that "sto furibondo tiran scorrerà per tutta l'Italia, la struggerà e conquisterà senza castigo? El qual non così tosto haverà sottoposto i Fiorentini (come tutto el mondo grida) che imediate prenderà l'arme contro di noi". <sup>61/</sup> The same speech goes on to mention the role which Carmagnola played: "..... El Carmagnola n'ha mostrado col so parlar el poder de Filippo ..... el qual esperto nella guerra non ha in tutta Italia ugual a sti tempi di gagliardia e disciplina delle milizie". <sup>62/</sup> He concluded that the war was to be prosecuted "con forte anemo" because it was a "guerra digo necessaria habendo l'inimigo cui potente e vizio, il quale aspira all'imperio dell'Italia."

Despite the fact that the authenticity of the speech is not undoubted, its content does have some important implications about the nature of the warfare which was to follow. It was the first example of a defensive-aggressive politico-military stance from Venice on such a large scale. This was primarily a war for the defence of the terraferma inspired first and foremost out of a sense of self preservation rather than out of any profound sense of political or ideological identification with Florence. This is patently borne out by the actual events of the war and by the eventual divergence of war aims as well as in the eventual terms of the peace treaties. In effect, as early as 1427-8 there was a reversal of roles: whereas Florence maintained a defensive attitude, Venice

took over as the dynamic partner and this set the tone of the struggle for hegemony in northern Italy which was to dominate the first half of the fifteenth century. This, of necessity, tended to put Mantua at the centre of the stage.

We are now in a better position to assess how important a part Gianfrancesco played in the final decision to go to war. There have been a number of divergent opinions expressed on this matter ranging from those who saw him as the prominent member of the war party,<sup>63/</sup> to those who saw him as being much more reluctant.<sup>64/</sup> There is no doubt that he had every reason to be alarmed at Filippo Maria's advances and that it was he who continually prompted the Venetians to provide him with adequate protection both with diplomacy and in more concrete terms. Venice also came increasingly to see the strategic value of Mantua's position and there can be little doubt that by 1426 it had reached the top of the list of priorities as far as defence was concerned.

However, as vigilant as Gianfrancesco was during this period, it was *protection* that he wanted, and not war. His deliberately low key activities indicate a desire not to draw too much attention to himself and this may, in part, account for the fact that he did not mediate on the two occasions when he could have. For instance, it will be shown that the vast concentrations of troops in the Mantovano in the January of 1426 tended to draw unwanted attention to his state and there is evidence to suggest that Gianfrancesco was none too happy at the weight of the burden which had been placed upon him.

In fact, it is very difficult to see Gianfrancesco as a war-monger during this period. It was in his interests to avoid war for as long as possible because he knew full well that the Mantovano would have to bear the brunt of it; so did the Venetians. The desire for protection and the reluctance to become over-involved was an inevitable dilemma for states such as Mantua. However, in reality Gianfrancesco had no real choice. The treaty of 1421 bound him closely to Venice; the Venetians had already proved their determination to protect Mantuan interests against Milan, and when matters escalated during the course of 1425 Gianfrancesco could do none other but follow Venice's lead. Once again, as in the past, Mantua was being used. Of course there was an identity of interest; but it was, to a certain extent, cosmetic, because a situation had been created whereby an identity of interest was inevitable.

Platina attributed to Gianfrancesco a speech to the Senate in which he outlined the case for war against the Milanese. From time to time outsiders were allowed to make speeches before the Senate and, given Gianfrancesco's friendship with Foscari, it is not completely beyond the bounds of possibility that he could have done so, although there is no documentary evidence in the Venetian archive to substantiate this. <sup>65/</sup> Platina relates how, although Gianfrancesco could appreciate the prudence of the Venetian Senate in not acting over-hastily, he nevertheless felt compelled to give his own reading of the situation. "Superatis Florentinis.. omnem vim belli in me ac in vos convertet..... Flectent persaepe oculos ad ea partem Venetiae, quam nos possidemus ..... superatis Florentinis, me, a quo Pischeriam Vitellianum repetit, Potentatu Mantuano spoliaverit..." <sup>66/</sup> Whatever doubt there might be about the authenticity of this speech, it is nevertheless true that it summed up perfectly the dangers which Mantua faced as well as Filippo Maria's objectives.

On 18 September 1425 the Senate decided in favour of the principle of a league with Florence and the Pope, but it recommended that an opportunity should still be given to Filippo Maria to come to terms if he chose to. <sup>67/</sup> However, the league, which was finally signed with the Florentines in December "pro defensione et conservationem statuum nostrorum ac libertatis et pacificus totus Italiae" did not include him. <sup>68/</sup> On the day the league was signed Ambrogio Badoer was instructed to inform Gianfrancesco of its terms. In addition to this Gianfrancesco was summoned to Venice as quickly as possible for urgent discussions regarding their mutual security. It is almost certain that this was the origin of the plans for the fortification of the Mantovano in the following January. <sup>69/</sup> The league included Venice, Florence, Ferrara, Gianfrancesco, and, from 11 July 1426, Amedeo of Savoy. It is interesting to note, from an examination of the terms of the league, which was to last initially for ten years irrespective of the war against Milan, that Venice appeared from the start as the dominant partner. <sup>70/</sup> In fact, the Florentines appeared to be somewhat disgruntled at the relatively harsh conditions imposed upon them by the Venetians. <sup>71/</sup> Anyhow, the most important part of the agreement was that an ultimatum was imposed upon Filippo Maria and if he did not come to terms by the following February, the armies of the league would take the field against him.

Filippo Maria did make desperate attempts to save the situation; Franchino da Castiglione was despatched to Venice, but by this time the Republic had firmly made up its mind not to give in. There is no need to go into excessive detail about the diplomacy of this period, <sup>72/</sup> but as far as Mantua was concerned the general trend was favourable to Gianfrancesco. Even though at the outset Venice was very cautious about over-hasty action, the underlying trend was one of gradual, but inevitable gravitation towards Florence and an anti-Viscontean league.



While it is true that for the most part Gianfrancesco was not involved directly in the actual negotiations, partly because of the reasons already mentioned, and partly because he had virtually placed himself in the hands of the Venetians, this did not mean that he was kept ignorant of the proceedings. Indeed it was an important part of Venetian policy to keep Gianfrancesco as fully informed about the state of affairs as was commensurate with the role Mantua was to play in the overall plan of defence; as they themselves stated "*iuxta solitem morem nostrum ea que habemus cum filiali mag.cie v.re*". <sup>73/</sup>

In the Gonzaga archive a considerable proportion of the documentary material consists of copies of ambassadors' despatches sent primarily from Ferrara and Venice. Such documentation is especially interesting for the end of 1425 and the early months of 1426 when negotiations had reached a critical stage.

A great deal of attention has been paid by scholars to the desultory character of the negotiations during this period, particularly to the way in which Filippo Maria was using them merely in order to gain time. In this respect the negotiations conducted at Ferrara at the end of February 1426 between Fantino Michiel and Antonio Contarini on the Venetian side, and Franchino da Castiglione on the Milanese side, are typical. Niccolò d'Este had offered himself as mediator and a very full account of the discussions was sent to Gianfrancesco. <sup>74/</sup> The discussions seem to have been characterised by a reluctance of both sides to make their relative positions clear and later on they degenerated into endless wranglings over points of procedure and conventions. <sup>75/</sup> It would appear that Franchino's mission was expressly designed to obstruct proceedings

because in the same report information was given which had been received from Bologna that plans were in hand for the imminent transfer of Milanese troops from the Romagna into Lombardy. The Venetian envoys, who had a very high opinion of Niccolò's loyalty to Venice, persuaded him to attempt to impede this passage <sup>76/</sup> and were not slow to point out the immense dangers which a failure to do so could create. They advised him to make reasonable provision quickly in the event that negotiations should break down. In addition to this Contarini and Michiel strongly suggested that Francesco Bembo should hasten the preparation of the Po fleet.

How does all this relate to Mantua affairs? The solution to this problem is relatively simple in essence even though the details can sometimes seem complex and contradictory. The truth of the matter is that the diplomatic impasse between Venice and Milan in February 1426 was not due merely to Franchino. On closer examination the Venetians could be accused of doing precisely the same thing as the Milanese in using negotiations which were fraught with semantics in order to gain time in order to consolidate their military strength. However, a conclusion of this kind without important qualification would be an altogether too simple conclusion. It would, in fact, seem that the Venetians themselves were facing a very real dilemma during this months of deciding when they should come out into the open.

It has been generally considered that the defection of Carmagnola greatly accelerated the process whereby the Venetians became involved in the league. While this is undeniably true, we must not forget that contingency plans for defence had already been in existence for some time, and this is perfectly in accord with Foscari's own avowed interest in the terraferma.

The Venetians may very well have been anxious for Este to fortify his frontiers but from January 1426 very important information had been gained from Mantua which must carry considerable responsibility for conditioning Venice's attitude at Ferrara. At this time the resident Venetian ambassador in Mantua, Ambrogio Badoer, had been observing developments on the borders very closely. Information which he had gathered regarding Milanese military preparations had been such that he had decided to report personally to the Senate. It would seem that Gianfrancesco's appeal to the Senate mentioned by Sanuto had had some effect. In a letter of the 4th January 1426 from the Doge to Gianfrancesco after Badoer had made his report there is a definite indication that a build-up of Venetian military power was about to take place in the area. <sup>77/</sup> In the same letter Gianfrancesco was requested to use his influence to obtain the services of Francesco Bolognini, a close associate of Angelo della Pergola, who Este was encouraged to negotiate with in the following month. <sup>78/</sup> Gianfrancesco appears to have been successful here because Bolognini appeared in Sanuto's military list of 1426 in command of 30 lances. <sup>79/</sup> In fact, the Venetians did place a great deal of confidence in Gianfrancesco's military judgement at this time and were continually asking his advice about the suitability of men who wished to enrol in their service. <sup>80/</sup>

It is from this time that we date Venice's deliberate policy of concentrating large numbers of troops in the Mantovano; the crucial area as far as they were concerned. The Venetians had evidently decided to take Gianfrancesco more closely than ever into their confidence and during this month there was a great deal of secret information exchanged regarding the movement of troops. <sup>81/</sup> The sort of numbers involved was extremely large and is a good indication of the gravity with which the Venetians viewed the situation. For instance, on 12 January, Gianfrancesco

was charged with arrangements to provide lodging in Mantua and the surrounding area for a total of no less than 810 lances, an operation which was to be supervised by Venetian rectors. Although Gianfrancesco was to have a certain amount of disciplinary authority over these troops, the movement of the men and their ultimate location was exclusively in Venetian hands. Gianfrancesco was required to make sure that the troops were adequately provisioned, and this, together with the billeting <sup>82/</sup> was to provide him with considerable organisational problems. <sup>83/</sup> These troops were destined primarily to reinforce the frontier areas, and not surprisingly, the areas of Lonato and Canedolo to the north together with Castelfelfredo which was particularly vulnerable at the time. There was even a suggestion that these already large numbers would be increased in the future. <sup>84/</sup>

All this was happening at the same time as the Venetians were also concerned at strengthening the Po fleet. On 13 January 1426 Gianfrancesco was informed of the election of Francesco Bembo as commander and that they were quickly fitting out 12 galleys and 20 'barche' in readiness for any eventuality. In addition they requested Gianfrancesco to prepare his own fleet which apparently consisted of 12 galleys "ut venientibus ipsis dictis galeis galeonibus et barchis nostris reperiant vestros in ordine et possunt se venire cum vestris". <sup>85/</sup> In short, it was the Venetian plan for both fleets to join together. It had been estimated that the Venetian fleet consisted of a total of 180 vessels of various sizes.

We can see, then, even by surveying one month, the massive extent of Venetian military activity in the Mantovano even before Carmagnola had taken effective charge of operations, and, what is more, while active negotiations were still in progress with Milan. In next to no time Mantua had taken on the appearance of an armed frontier state acting as a front

100.

line defence between Milan and Venice. It could well have been the case that it was hoped that such a strong display of military presence by Venice would help the negotiations at Ferrara by showing Filippo Maria that they could back up their arguments by military strength if necessary. However, in the circumstances, the discussions of February 1426 never ultimately had any hope of material success.

There is one final point to be made in connection with the Venetian attitude to these negotiations with the Milanese. The fortification of the Mantovano in the first instance stemmed basically from the desire to negotiate from a position of greater strength. While it was true that Venice was becoming more insistent with Milan than they had been in the past, it was still not their intention to appear to be the aggressors. In a letter dated 18 February 1426 from Foscari to Gianfrancesco, he wrote that Venice was still trying to keep an open mind regarding Franchino's embassy "*per modum per nos propositum quamquam nos perseverantes in naturali dispositione nostra pacis*".<sup>86/</sup> In fact the Venetians offered to negotiate either through the mediation of Gianfrancesco or Este.<sup>87/</sup> It is significant that the Milanese chose Este; Filippo Maria clearly considered that Gianfrancesco was much too closely involved with Venice to perform this office with the degree of neutrality which was required. It could, of course, be argued that Este's own position was not too dissimilar.

Although the Venetians were anxious to emphasise their defensive attitude, in the final analysis it is very difficult to believe that such massive concentrations of troops were intended specifically as a mere deterrent to the Milanese. If Venice's situation seems at times to be rather ambiguous and that they were playing fast and loose with Milan

in their desire at the same time to negotiate for peace while strengthening their fighting power, it is because the Venetians were involved in a situation which was basically new to them. What we are witnessing here, in effect, is a gradual transformation of policy, and the months of January and February 1426 are the first manifestation of the change of attitude which had theoretically been mooted in 1421; in other words, it was an implementation of policy. What is more, the Mantovano was the centre of this change of direction and this was partly due to Gianfrancesco's own requests for protection.

At least on one occasion during the earlier part of 1426 a nasty situation looked like developing which gives a clue to the sort of 'cold war' which was being waged on the frontiers with the Cremonese. This could have been very dangerous for Mantuan security. A letter of 25 February informed Gianfrancesco that the Milanese were apparently constructing a bridge over the Po just below Cremona and Gianfrancesco was requested to find out what was going on and report back.<sup>87\*</sup> In fact they were anxious that this bridge should not be constructed and, depending upon Gianfrancesco's estimate of the situation, they were prepared to take action "cum galeis et galeonis nostris et domini Marchionis et vobis obviare provideat, ne dictus pons fiat". Although there is no further indication of what happened, possibly because work on the bridge was suspended, the whole incident is indicative of the extreme tension which existed in this area at the time.

The terms demanded by the Venetians at Ferrara in 1426 were much too harsh for Filippo Maria to accept. These included not merely respecting the agreement of 1420 but also involved abandoning Imola, Forlì, Genoa and the liberation of Carlo Malatesta and Carmagnola's family. Agreement on

these terms was never really a viable possibility. <sup>88/</sup> These negotiations were the last efforts at a peaceful solution and as soon as they had been suspended Gianfrancesco wrote to Foscari that Franchino da Castiglione had relayed to him on his way back to Milan precisely what had transpired in Ferrara. On 20 February he assured the Venetians of his absolute support. <sup>89/</sup>

To sum up so far. In the period which immediately preceded the outbreak of hostilities Gianfrancesco Gonzaga and his state played a more important role than has been hitherto ascribed to them. Although Venice was justifiably cautious in avoiding a complete break with Milan until the very last minute, we have seen by the build-up firstly of close ties of friendship with Gianfrancesco and, as the war became more and more of a possibility, a considerable concentration of troops in the Mantovano, that Gianfrancesco figured largely in Venetian policy, and that this became most definitely pronounced after Francesco Foscari became Doge. He, more than most, was able to appreciate fully the possibilities for defensive and offensive action inherent in Mantua's strategic position. It is not insignificant that this first manifestation of a new orientation of Venetian policy took place essentially in the Mantovano.

The same was true of Gianfrancesco. As the Milanese aggression became more and more of a reality, he needed Venetian friendship more than anything else even though it would be unfair to associate him actively with the 'war party'. It was such matters which, to quite a great extent, made for this special identity of purpose between Gianfrancesco and Venice which transcended their relationship with Carmagnola. It is important to appreciate that the

basis of Gianfrancesco's agreement with Venice was not a condotta; there is no documentary evidence of one at all, only the treaty of 1421, and this further underlines the difference between his position and that of Carmagnola. Anyhow, by the end of February 1426 one thing was eminently clear to Gianfrancesco. Not only was he fighting for Venice; but he was also fighting for his own personal survival.

### III

#### The Progress of the War up to the First Peace of Ferrara

This was a war in which big issues were at stake; clearly this was going to be warfare on a scale, and with implications which were radically different from the small-scale sporadic encounters which had preceeded it and this is largely why it became endemic as neither side was prepared to give way. It was because of this that the wars which ensued necessitated a much more fully developed military strategy and technology which in turn required a radically altered relationship between state and condottiere.

This 'decellerated' and fundamentally acquisitive warfare meant that it was on a very large scale. It has been estimated that the size of the army was around 22,000 cavalry and 8,000 infantry.<sup>90/</sup> The terms of the league had stipulated that Florence and Venice were each to provide at their own expense 8,000 cavalry and 3,000 infantry. These armies were the largest that had ever been seen in living memory in Italy, and this fact was noted by many contemporaries.<sup>91/</sup> In addition to this a large fleet of boats was prepared for a river campaign. Bembo commanded the Po fleet of 180 vessels and Stefano Contarini was to command a fleet of 63 large armed ships and 2,000 sailors for service off the Ligurian coast.



When the war was finally declared on 3 March 1426 an extraordinary council of 100 patricians had been set up to oversee the conduct of the war and a special war tax was levied. <sup>92/</sup> Niccolò Trevisan was sent to proclaim the war in the Venetian provinces and Marco Dandolo and Giogio Correr were assigned to the Captain-General as provveditori. The way in which the war machinery was brought smoothly into action would further indicate an efficient and well co-ordinated contingency plan.

There are two important things which emerge from this picture and which were to affect Gianfrancesco directly. The strategy of the war was to be based implicitly upon a combination of river and land campaigns and this factor involved a degree of co-ordination which was as likely to condition the relationship between Gianfrancesco and Venice as it concerned Carmagnola himself. The resulting relationship consisted basically of two elements. Firstly, because of the nature of the war and because the sums of money involved were so large, Venice wished to ensure a much closer personal supervision of the war and clearly felt a much greater obligation to ensure that its wishes and interests were protected; hence the strict supervision of the provveditori. The position of the provveditori had not changed, but the exigencies of the war highlighted their role more. Secondly, as early as the 1420's the condottiere system, which had played such an important part in the evolution of the state, was being outgrown with the development of the larger territorial states. In effect, established attitudes towards the conduct of warfare and the realities of political power were beginning to part company. It was one of the consequences of territorial aggrandisement that made it of prime importance to establish closer and more permanent ties with its military commander. This was

potentially an excellent relationship, provided that state policy did not become divorced from military feasibility. It will be demonstrated, however, that in practice, Venice's record was not particularly good in this respect and both Carmagnola and Gianfrancesco became victims of its shortcomings.

The strong Venetian presence in Mantua did provide Gianfrancesco with the maximum amount of security possible. This contingency plan proved to be one of Venice's most astute moves. Although there was no question of surprise tactics at this stage, the Venetians did at least have their forces in the right place and were in a position at the outset to take the war right into the Milanese camp. In particular, the concentrations around Castelfelfredo were ideally placed for an attack upon Brescia, which was the most important objective of the first war.

However, it would be most inaccurate to attribute all the most significant developments in the Mantovano to the period after Carmagnola's arrival in March 1426, as most scholars have hitherto suggested. Once again, Gianfrancesco's work in this respect has either been underestimated or completely ignored. In fact, the Venetian military machine could not have moved into action so swiftly and smoothly had it not been for Gianfrancesco's careful preparations throughout the first three months of 1426 after his active entry into the league.<sup>93/</sup> Not only was Gianfrancesco actively engaged in raising men for the army, but he was conducting an active correspondence with Venice over crucial questions of security; putting the final touches to the overall plan of military defence.

For instance, in February he was buying himself with plans for the transport of men he had raised to Mantua. He had sent Federigo da Villanova one of his secretaries, to Florence in the previous month in order to engage the services of Antonello da Siena, together with between 350 and 400 cavalry. At the beginning of February he was anxious that these troops should now come to the Mantovano. On 7 February Federigo was instructed to request the Governor of Bologna for a safe-conduct for these soldiers. <sup>94/</sup> In the accompanying letter to Federigo we have an example of the mounting seriousness of the military situation in which he considered that speed was necessary. <sup>95/</sup> Gianfrancesco was determined to use this breathing space as productively as possible. In fact, Gianfrancesco was not only busy raising men on his own account; he was also urging Venice to raise men in Ancona, which he highly recommended. <sup>96/</sup>

At the end of the previous month Gianfrancesco had been in consultation with Foscari over the fortification of weak points in the Mantovano. On 18 February he wrote a letter thanking the Doge for keeping him informed about the state of negotiations with Filippo Maria in which he raised the important question of strengthening the area immediately affected by Brescia. He had just received information that Oldrado de Lampugnano had arrived in Brescia and was somewhat alarmed by these developments. <sup>97/</sup> Such intelligence made him even more anxious that his best men should be placed in this area. In the letter he asked specifically for the services of Bianchino da Feltre in Castelfoffredo and that more men should be sent to Lonato which was still relatively undefended. <sup>98/</sup> At this time Bianchino was at Canedolo, a relatively safe place on the borders with the Veneto. Gianfrancesco valued this man highly and suggested that a redistribution of such men would be a more productive use of military resources. After all,

Canedolo did not really need defending.<sup>99/</sup> We can even see thus far that Gianfrancesco was no mere cypher in the preparations for the war; on the contrary we see him offering intelligent advice as to the best use of resources available.

However, such preparations not only cost him much effort, they were also very expensive. This was, in fact, a matter which bothered Gianfrancesco very much even before the war broke out. We have already noted how much of a strain it was upon Mantuan resources to have to provide for so many troops. Although the terms of his treaty with Venice stipulated that 2,000 ducats should be set aside monthly, the preparations in the Mantovano had cost considerably more. It is, therefore, not surprising that in January Gianfrancesco was asking Donato de'Prete to raise a loan of 5,000 ducats in Venice. Part of this sum had been obtained earlier in the month, but by the 18th Gianfrancesco was becoming impatient for the rest.<sup>100/</sup> By 22 January he was once again writing about this matter, but this time in more urgent terms. Apparently by this date the preparations had cost him more than 15,000 ducats and this was clearly a level of expenditure which a state of Mantua's size could not be expected to meet.<sup>101/</sup>

This sort of thing was to set the tone for the rest of the wars. Venice was never very prompt in paying Gianfrancesco and on many subsequent occasions, as we shall see, he was driven to raising further loans and Paola was even forced to pawning jewellery and plate. Gianfrancesco's letters to his wife even during this first war are almost totally concerned with the despatch of money to him in the field.<sup>102/</sup> Although Gianfrancesco was fighting this war for his own existence, it is frequently forgotten that the financial burden of fighting it was crippling. It is certainly true that his lack of success after the peace of Cavriana in 1442 was due in

part to the debts which he had contracted during the wars.

However, despite the frequent difficulties of his financial situation, purely military and defence problems were more immediately pressing in the early months of 1426, and by the end of January and the beginning of February it was the fortification of the border areas which claimed most of Gianfrancesco's attention and during the whole of this period he was trying to get as much information as possible about the movement of Milanese troops so that he could make appropriate adjustments to his plans.

On 22 January 1426 he relayed with some trepidation the information that Francesco Sforza's arrival in the area was imminent and that Milanese troops were concentrating in the Bresciano and the Cremonese.<sup>103/</sup> Gianfrancesco suggested that because of these developments it was essential that the fortification of the corresponding areas of the Mantovano should be completed as quickly as possible and that he should be given the authority to move the forces into these areas as he saw fit.<sup>104/</sup> This was not an occasion to waste time waiting for constant instructions, he remarked, and he was worried lest a crisis should occur which could have been otherwise averted had he been able to act on his own initiative.<sup>105/</sup>

There is a very interesting commentary upon this situation in a letter which Guido Torello despatched to Filippo Maria on 8 February 1426. This letter, a copy of which exists in the Mantuan Archive and must have been intercepted, gives a clue as to how feverish the preparations were getting on the Milanese side and how badly the war was going in the Romagna. Torello's own Guastalla was extremely vulnerable and Gianfrancesco was very angry that Guido had thrown in his lot with the Milanese.<sup>106/</sup> It would seem that

arrangements about the raising and billeting of men in Umbria had not gone at all smoothly.<sup>107/</sup> In fact, Guido mentioned that without the services of Francesco Sforza, the Milanese would be hard pressed.<sup>108/</sup> In fact, an absence of effective organisation among the Milanese commanders when the war was transferred to Lombardy was one of the main reasons for their lack of overall success.

Gianfrancesco was also attending to the building up of the river fleet, following his instructions from Venice. Gianfrancesco was anxious to do this correctly because he appreciated the importance of the role which river operations would play in this war. A good fleet could not only back up the land forces effectively and take the war deep into enemy territory, but as far as Gianfrancesco was concerned, it could primarily provide a hopefully adequate defence for the Serraglio, the 'soft underbelly' of the Mantovano. Because of these reasons he instructed Donato de' Preti to consult closely with Francesco Bembo, whose naval expertise Gianfrancesco prized highly,<sup>109/</sup> over the question of how effectively each of his ships should be armed.<sup>110/</sup> Judging from the details with which he furnished Donato, four of his ships were fairly large, powered by 37 oars, four more had 35 and the remaining four had 25.<sup>111/</sup>

The Venetians could hardly have failed to be impressed by the work of these two months. Mantua was most certainly functioning in the way in which Venice intended; but another significant factor was the way in which Gianfrancesco himself had acted. He had shown the qualities of clear-mindedness, forcefulness, together with a considerable ability and taste for organisation. It was these very qualities which he was to demonstrate in the campaigns of the war and which augured so well for the

future. When Carmagnola arrived in Mantua on 3 March he really had very little organising to do because everything had been set up in advance for him by Gianfrancesco.

Moreover, Gianfrancesco was very conscious of the value of his work and expected to be rewarded for it. When Carmagnola was given his instructions to go to Mantua on 26 February he was specifically requested to consult as closely as possible with Gianfrancesco as well as with Ambrogio Badoer and the two provveditori over the strategy which was to be employed.<sup>112/</sup> The Venetians went to considerable trouble to ensure that from the start Gianfrancesco's opinions were taken very carefully into consideration. The honour of carrying the standard of St. Mark had been granted to Niccolò d'Este and Gianfrancesco had shown a certain amount of annoyance at this. Consequently one of the provveditori's first tasks was to calm Gianfrancesco down over this matter. It was sometimes very difficult to please everybody at once and the management of a large army consisting of a number of prominent soldiers presented many problems of 'diplomacy'. It must be emphasised that Este was in the service of the Florentines at this time and as such was not strictly concerned with Venice. The provveditori were instructed to inform Gianfrancesco that in the event of Carmagnola not being able to exercise his command because of ill-health the honour of commanding the troops was to be given to him.<sup>113/</sup> The appointment of Gianfrancesco as second in command was more than adequate compensation for the time being and this was an astute move by the Senate in more ways than one. By this time it was reasonably well known that Carmagnola was physically past his prime and not in the best of health due, in part, to injuries sustained after a fall.<sup>114/</sup> The Senate, which already had good cause to see Gianfrancesco's promising personal qualities, was, therefore, virtually ensuring that at some time during the campaigns,

he would be able to demonstrate his abilities at overall command, if only on a temporary basis. There is much to lead us to believe that Gianfrancesco was being groomed to succeed Carmagnola right from the beginning.

As far as the character of Carmagnola's leadership is concerned, he was highly respected, not only by the state, but he also inspired the confidence and loyalty of his men. His abilities as a tactician, combined with his highly impressive record of success, made for a sense of pride and cohesion among his men as well as providing an important incentive for a more permanent continuity among the personnel of the army. This sense of loyalty was very important in a military organisation in which mutual respect was the most important cohesive factor.<sup>115/</sup>

It was vitally important for the new Captain General to have a harmonious working relationship with Gianfrancesco. This is reiterated again and again in the documents of the period. There is no documentary evidence to prove that Carmagnola and Gianfrancesco had met before the beginning of the year.<sup>116/</sup> Three days after the outbreak of the war, on 6 March, Ambrogio Badoer and Constantino de'Constantinis had returned to Venice from Mantua to report on the state of readiness in the Mantovano.<sup>117/</sup> Venice was anxious to keep a very close watch upon these two men from the start.

In the event, there was little cause for worry because Carmagnola and Gianfrancesco seem to have got on extremely well together. It was clear that Gianfrancesco had a great deal of respect for the older man and, during the course of the first phase of the wars, learnt a great deal from him, so much so, in fact, that their military careers pursued roughly parallel courses. So much depended upon their harmonious co-operation as far as



the strategy was concerned, because the city of Mantua itself was designated by Carmagnola as his military base. Indeed, the prominence of Mantua in this war is further illustrated in a number of other ways. In the military list which Sanuto documented, it was Gianfrancesco who was to provide the largest single contingent of 400 lances. At this stage, Carmagnola is recorded as having only provided 230.<sup>118/</sup>

In direct contrast to the disciplined and cohesive allied army, there seem to have been frequent clashes of opinion among the Visconti commanders. There were two factions consisting of Sforza and Piccinino on the one side, who advocated more active and aggressive measures against the enemy, and Della Pergola and Torello on the other side, who were more inclined to temporise wherever possible, a factor which Gianfrancesco later capitalised upon. Carlo Malatesta was chosen as commander in chief, a man of whom Muratori writes "esperto, ma poco fortunato, maestro di guerra".<sup>119/</sup> Such a state of affairs was a clear disadvantage, especially as the Venetians, due to Gianfrancesco's preparations, moved very quickly indeed in the opening stages of the war at a time when a large number of Filippo Maria's troops were still in the Romagna.

In the light of the relationships discussed above, we are in a much better position to assess the nature of Gianfrancesco's contribution to the war.<sup>120/</sup> However, before doing so, it would be useful to give some idea of the nature of the terrain in which the war was fought and the general strategy which it entailed.

Most of the war in the years under review was fought in the area between the Adige and Adda rivers. The Lombard plain is very open country and is consequently suited to large-scale military operations. It is divided up very conveniently into a number of smaller compartments which are delineated by the tributaries of the Po, the most important of which are the Adige, Mincio, Oglio, Adda, Ticino and the Sesia. The suitability of the terrain for large scale campaigning combined with the configuration of the rivers meant, especially after the fall of Brescia, when the war became for Venice one of territorial acquisition, that the rivers could be used most effectively in conjunction with the land forces. This is why the fleets were mobilised at the outset. Such a combination of forces is most effective for this type of warfare, especially since the vertical division by the rivers is most pronounced. The strategy which this dictated was very simple; the occupation of the rivers and the destruction of fortresses and bridges would impede the movement of the enemy and make communications difficult whilst allowing the intervening territory to be occupied by the land forces. In a very general way the war can be seen as a movement from river to river. As far as Venice was concerned, the ultimate aim at this stage was to establish its western boundary along the banks of the Adda.

This would in part, for example, explain the reason for Bembo's orders to destroy the fortification at Cremona and attack Pizzighettone while Niccolò d'Este was to impede the Milanese army in the Romagna from returning to Lombardy.<sup>121/</sup> The fact that in Lombardy itself there were very few soldiers, commanded at the time by Francesco Sforza,<sup>122/</sup> illustrates the very real state of unpreparedness in Milan and Venice's desire to gain

maximum benefit from this state of affairs, especially since the Mantovano was such a good base for operations. While all this river campaigning was going on, the obvious target for the land army would be Brescia, whose possession as we have already pointed out, was seen by both sides as one of the most crucial factors in the war. We are here seeing an example of *integrated* strategy which aimed at more permanent results which was in direct contrast to the sporadic cavalry warfare of the late fourteenth century. This is, then, a strategy which was perfectly suited to the aims of the war. It was a warfare which, of necessity, moved at a slower pace and this, in itself, was to encourage the greater prominence which was given to infantry over cavalry.<sup>123/</sup>

This first campaign has generally been seen as a war primarily for the defence of the *terraferma*. In a sense this was true in so far as Filippo Maria's presence in the Bresciano and Cremonese was a direct threat. However, the fact must not be ignored that the initial aggressive moves were made by the forces of the league. These opening moves were the results of the joint discussions between Carmagnola, Gianfrancesco, Badoer and the two *provveditori*, despite the fact that the Senate imposed general lines of policy. The general aim of the first campaign was to attack where the most damage could be inflicted upon Filippo Maria. There were three objectives; to take Brescia, destroy the fortifications at Cremona, and to cross the Oglio up to Pizzighettone which was regarded as the key to the Adda.

Of these objectives, Brescia was by far the most important, and Gianfrancesco's preparations in the area already represented a considerable advantage. Not only has his preliminary work in this area been

underestimated, but his actual contribution to the successful outcome of the siege as a whole has been undervalued. Up to now the tendency has always been to regard these opening campaigns as being almost totally the conception of Carmagnola. This judgement, which we have already questioned, needs even more qualification when we consider the actual events of the war.

It was nevertheless very fortunate for Venice that Carmagnola was directing the siege of Brescia from the outset because, having been responsible for capturing it for the Milanese in the first place, he was most likely to have firsthand knowledge of the weak points in its defences. Moreover, with connections within the city he was able to play upon the resentment which was widely felt against the oppressiveness of Visconti rule as represented by Oldrado de Lampugnano and Jacopino da Castiolo.<sup>124/</sup> But not only was Carmagnola one of the moving spirits behind the 'congiura di Gussago',<sup>125/</sup> he was also encouraging the Avogadro and Nassini to mobilise dissidents in the Val Trompia, Val Sabbia and the Val Camonica<sup>126/</sup> which again emphasised the importance of rivers and river valleys in Venetian strategy. Large numbers of disguised soldiers were sent to lead the revolts even though in the end the great majority did not participate in the struggle.<sup>127/</sup> As we have seen, this was the policy which Gianfrancesco had been preparing since the beginning of the year.

This, however, was a very large scale campaign and consequently required large resources to draw upon.<sup>128/</sup> Not only did Carmagnola ask for 300 'balestrieri' and a large number of bombards from the 'Cento di Guerra' to conduct the siege, but he also asked for a sum of 25,000 florins to be provided in order to compensate the citizens for any damage done. This was essential to gain the goodwill of the citizens and to ensure the permanence of Venetian influence in a city which had frequently changed hands.

The siege of Brescia also demonstrated an important development in the specialisation of warfare which was to become more pronounced as the century progressed, and because of the considerable cost of siege artillery, this meant that there was an increasing dependence upon, and control by, the state.

Another important aspect of the siege of Brescia is the importance of field fortifications and earthworks. For instance, the trench dug around the city by Tolentino, an expert in this field, was frequently to be imitated later on in the century. This is yet another example of how these wars were an important point of departure for new techniques.<sup>129/</sup>

An advance contingent of 800 infantry was sent into the Bresciano, and Carmagnola and the provveditori followed soon afterwards with more infantry and cavalry. The main onslaught was to take place on 17 March when the sympathisers within Brescia engineered the entry of this force under cover of night at the Porta dell'Albera in the Canton Bagnolo. The Ducal forces were taken unawares and were dispersed throughout the Bresciano and there was consequently very little resistance. Carmagnola raised the Venetian standard, bridges were thrown over ditches, scaling ladders were let down over the walls and popular support was roused.<sup>130/</sup> This support was an important part of the plan because the Bresciani had been thinking for a long time of going over to Venice.

On 14 March Carmagnola had briefly returned to Venice in order to appraise the Senate of his plans and also to collect together the remaining troops in the Trevisano.<sup>131/</sup> Gianfrancesco was thus left to finalise preparations in Mantua and when the siege began it was Gianfrancesco's task, to back up Carmagnola's efforts.

Unfortunately, the plan was not totally successful. Although the 'rocca' of S.Nazzaro was occupied the two citadels were in Milanese hands. On the following day reinforcements arrived commanded by Antonio da Landriano.<sup>132/</sup> A force of 1,000 infantry and 6,000 cavalry sent by Gianfrancesco was waiting at Mompiano and entered the city by the Porta dell'Albera.<sup>133/</sup> However, despite such a massive effort, the arrival of Francesco Sforza on 21 March gave added encouragement to the beleaguered ducal forces.<sup>134/</sup> Sforza replaced Landriano as overall commander. Their plight was still very serious indeed and Carmagnola and Gianfrancesco exerted so much pressure on the Milanese that after the capture of the Citadella Vecchia, and the 'rocche' of Torlonga and S.Alessandro, they were shut up in the Citadella Nuova which had been greatly strengthened by Filippo Maria. It was protected by strong walls and a large ditch.

After the dramatic opening the first campaign settled down to a long period of siege. In fact, the Citadella Nuova only surrendered on 22 September 1426. However, in March it did not seem to the Venetians that the siege was likely to last long because Sforza's supplies were not particularly plentiful.<sup>135/</sup> Nevertheless, the events of that month were such that there were great festivities in Venice. The occupation of Brescia was the prelude to an extension of Venetian power into the Bresciano.<sup>136/</sup> It was not surprising, therefore, that the unexpected resistance of the Citadella Vecchia appeared more and more as the running sore of the war and the Senate was anxious to complete the task as quickly as possible. So was Gianfrancesco for more immediate reasons.

The role which Gianfrancesco played in the siege of Brescia has been the subject of some argument among chroniclers and commentators. Of course the Mantuan writers Platina and Possevino had argued that his role in the affair was instrumental.<sup>137/</sup> While such views tend to overestimate Gianfrancesco's part, there is an element of truth in them, however. Just as his advice had been extremely important in the preparations for the campaign, as we have seen, it was intended by the Venetians that he should play a significant role in the events of the siege themselves. There can, of course, be no doubt that the overall conception of the siege was Carmagnola's; his previous experience in this respect made that inevitable; but the known facts about the progress of the siege now lead us to reassess Gianfrancesco's importance in the light of the remarks we have made above.

Even though the two men had known each other for a relatively short time, it was inescapable that the siege and liberation of Brescia would have to be a joint effort between Venetian and Mantuan troops. There is much to indicate that from the very beginning Carmagnola held Gianfrancesco in high regard and had been particularly impressed by how well organised the preparations in the Mantovano had been. There is every cause to believe that he regarded Gianfrancesco as a second in command in the fullest sense of the word, and was quite willing to entrust him with tasks commensurate with the responsibilities of that office. The siege of Brescia involved basically two components; the Citadella Nuova and the Porta delle Pile.

After the first attempts to take the citadel by storm had failed and the prospects of a quite lengthy siege became more and more likely, Carmagnola became more interested in taking the Porta delle Pile in order

to conquer its adjacent 'borgo' which still held out for the Milanese.<sup>138/</sup>  
 This was at the end of March and the very beginning of April 1426. Carmagnola even then had sufficient confidence in Gianfrancesco to leave him in charge of the main centre of operations.

His experiences earlier in Bologna must have stood him in good stead because he seemed to have conducted himself very well indeed; so well, in fact, that when Carmagnola, unable to complete his part of the operations because of his old war wounds,<sup>139/</sup> asked leave of the Venetians to go to Abano to take the waters, Gianfrancesco was left in sole command of the siege.<sup>140/</sup> Before Carmagnola left on 5 April the Senate wrote to Gianfrancesco confirming this officially and asked him, in addition to conducting the siege itself, to undertake a number of operations in the vicinity where and when the opportunities should present themselves.<sup>141/</sup> This, apart from presenting an ambitious man like Gianfrancesco with a marvellous opportunity to show his worth, was also a valuable occasion for the Senate to observe how Gianfrancesco could cope with the special problems of overall responsibility. In fact, this was to be the first of two occasions when this occurred. Gianfrancesco's actions were to be very closely supervised. The senate also approved of Gianfrancesco's plan to send Ludovico de Michielotis to protect his southern borders in order to prevent any further crossing of Milanese troops from the Romagna.<sup>142/</sup>

Raulich, in his account of this first Lombard war, was not very complimentary of the way in which Gianfrancesco conducted himself. He stated: "La breve assenza del Carmagnola fece indugiare la espugnazione della fortezza..... se le forze dei viscontei fossero state pur numerose, Brescia sarebbe stata perduta per gli alleati".<sup>143/</sup> The last point he makes is valid enough but he has been unduly harsh on Gianfrancesco. First



of all Carmagnola's absence was certainly not brief. In fact, he did not leave Venice for Brescia until 13 May, over a month later.<sup>144/</sup> There is no evidence that the Senate was urging him to hurry back to Brescia. In fact, he is reported to have remained in Venice for more than a week before returning to the siege. Had things been going badly the Senate would hardly have permitted this. It almost seemed as though it was anxious to give Gianfrancesco as much time on his own as possible in order to gain as much experience as he could.

As to the contention that Carmagnola's absence prolonged the siege, there is no evidence to prove that Gianfrancesco was lax or incompetent in carrying out his duties. On the contrary he carried out the Senate's instructions to the letter and his enthusiasm and energy in the conduct of his duties is attested by Venetian and Milanese writers alike. For instance, Sabellico described Gianfrancesco as 'viro impigro' and is very complimentary about how effectively he assumed command: "Quo absente (Carmagnola), ductu et auspiciis Gonzagae ita impigre omnia administrata dicuntur, ut Imperatoris in nulla re desideraretur praesentia".<sup>145/</sup>

Gianfrancesco's own achievement was all the more commendable because he was up against a very experienced opponent and Sforza hoped to capitalise upon the absence of Carmagnola by redoubling his efforts against the besiegers. Even the Milanese chronicler Billia has a word of praise for Gianfrancesco's determination in withstanding these forays: "Nec Cotignola quietos finebat, nullum omnino diem ab eruptione cessare, mireque illius juvenis virtus per omne id tempus eminuit, ut saepe nec dimidio, quem diximus, equitatu ad intima quoque castra prodierit, reductis frequento numero ex hoste captivis, ac plerumque trucidaris, si qua forsan pertinacius accurrissent."<sup>146/</sup>

Above all, Gianfrancesco could afford to be well pleased with his first efforts at Brescia; they certainly gained the admiration of Sforza and was the beginning of a relationship of mutual respect between the two men even though they were on opposite sides. Far from prolonging the siege, Gianfrancesco had succeeded in tightening his grip on the city and the whole experience was a great fillip to his self confidence.

Moreover, he had felt sufficiently secure of his own position to conduct a very successful campaign in the area around Brescia. Carmagnola's plan had included the conquest of the mountainous regions to the north of Brescia, including the Riviera di Salò, an area which especially affected one of the most delicate points in the Mantovano. During the month of April Gianfrancesco succeeded in strengthening allied presence together with most of the important castles in the Riviera del Garda.<sup>147/</sup> This was also very welcome for the Venetians because it relieved the threat to the Veronese.

Gianfrancesco was also very active to the south of Brescia. Towards the end of April he launched a vigorous attack against Quinzano with a force of around three thousand cavalry. Quinzano was situated on the Oglio on the border between the Bresciano and the Veronese. Despite its relatively small size there was a considerable degree of resistance.<sup>148/</sup> There were two main reasons for this; Quinzano was not only an important centre of communications with Cremona, it was a base for provisioning the ducal troops.<sup>149/</sup> The spoils of this victory, therefore, were considerable,<sup>150/</sup> and also demonstrated Gianfrancesco's intelligent appreciation of the strategic advantages inherent in this success. Apart from interrupting enemy communications, control of this area on the borders with the Mantovano gave Gianfrancesco added personal security while at the same time pushing Venetian

influence forward to the banks of the Oglio, an important staging point in the overall strategy of the war.

When Carmagnola returned to the siege, then, he took over a favourable situation<sup>151/</sup> but, although Gianfrancesco had accomplished his tasks admirably, the same could not be said of Niccolò d'Este. He had not been successful in preventing the passage of ducal reinforcements under the command of Angelo della Pergola from transferring to Lombardy. This could certainly have had an adverse effect upon the course of the siege if they were able to relieve Sforza. By the beginning of May the army had already reached Parma,<sup>152/</sup> and Sforza was ordered to join up with this force at Montechiari. All these movements are yet another illustration of how well Gianfrancesco had anticipated what was going to happen when he planned the fortification of the area.

Carmagnola's encounter with these forces was indecisive but the initial effect of the army which had managed to bypass Este was negligible. The fact that Carmagnola turned to Brescia to continue the siege would indicate that to him the Milanese army posed no immediate threat. It is evident from Carmagnola's actions that even in his declining years he was generally able to maintain a correct sense of military priorities. His movements always appear to have been carefully considered even though he was increasingly criticised for his slowness of action by the Senate. He clearly appreciated the fact that Brescia was the nodal point from which he could radiate outwards and reinforce his foothold in the Bresciano, a policy which, up to this point, Gianfrancesco had played an important part in accomplishing. After Carmagnola's return to the front, Gianfrancesco resumed his supporting

role. For instance, on 1 June it was reported that Guido Torello with a force of 4,000 cavalry and 3,500 infantry together with a large contingent of Genoese 'balestrieri' was on his way to Brescia. In order to counteract this Carmagnola immediately assembled a force of roughly the same size and left Brescia in the hands of the Provveditori. Gianfrancesco's task was to command a similar force and hold himself in readiness in case he should be needed. In the end, such a strong Venetian offensive resulted in Torello's returning to Montechiari and the danger being temporarily averted.<sup>153/</sup>

These land operations were amply complemented by the successes of Bembo and the Po fleet which, after destroying bridges and fortifications at Cremona, were proceeding to capture the fortresses of Maccastorna and Castiglione. This is a classic example of the art of river warfare at which the Venetians excelled, due in no small part, to a long history of naval expertise; and was to have the double effect of securing communications and providing a natural barrier against the enemy. Although Lombardy is practically the only place in Italy where such tactics could be successfully applied on such an extensive scale, it is an excellent example of an effective and methodical use of terrain. The Milanese could never match the Venetians in this respect, even though, a year later, when their forces seem to have been more efficiently organised, their fleet was used successfully to capture Casalmaggiore (17 April 1427). The Manutan fleet, armed according to Bembo's own instructions, acquitted itself very well indeed despite the fact that one galley was captured by the enemy.<sup>154/</sup>

However, certainly up to December of 1426, Milanese fortunes were definitely on the wane. In a letter to Sigismund dated 8 July Filippo Maria stated that unless help was soon forthcoming his position would be very precarious indeed.<sup>155/</sup> He was also appealing to Alfonso of Aragon, the

Swiss and the Duke of Teck for help. It was also at this time that Amedeo was gravitating towards Venice, anxious that he should expand his boundaries eastwards.<sup>156/</sup> Although this would have been a valuable alliance for the anti-Viscontean league, Savoyard ambitions were always regarded with a considerable degree of circumspection, and, as it turned out, with justification.

Although Gianfrancesco had been especially concerned with the security of Viadana, Peschiera and Lonato thus far in the war, he had not neglected the central portion of his frontiers. For some time now he had been very interested in the town of Asola, which lay on the banks of the river Chiese roughly midway between Mantua and Milan.

Asola had long been a disputed area and possession tended to oscillate a great deal. As early as 1335 it had been a Gonzaga possession, but in 1405 it had been in the possession of Pandolfo Malatesta.<sup>157/</sup> We have already had cause to mention the dispute between Pandolfo and Gianfrancesco over the fortress of Piubega;<sup>158/</sup> a similar situation existed *vis-a-vis* Asola.<sup>159/</sup> Pandolfo was now wanting to redeem his pledge but, judging from Gianfrancesco's reply six days later, the situation was rather more complex. Gianfrancesco insisted that the 'rocca' of Asola had been sold to him<sup>160/</sup> and, moreover, that he was quite prepared to allow Venice to arbitrate in the matter if no arrangement could be reached between them privately.<sup>161/</sup> It may well be the case that in so doing Gianfrancesco was conscious of playing safe in the light of his efforts on behalf of Venetian interests.

This dispute looked as if it was going to go on for some time, and the whole issue was finally overtaken by the outbreak of hostilities. Eventually, the Asolani themselves decided and at the beginning of June

they sent Giorgio Dario the 'capitano del popolo' secretly to Gianfrancesco to declare to him their wish to put themselves under his jurisdiction.<sup>162/</sup> It is not clear whether they were giving themselves to Gianfrancesco in his capacity as Lord of Mantua or as a Venetian condottiere; the evidence seems at times to be contradictory.<sup>163/</sup> In the final analysis it is probably the case that they accepted him in both capacities and Gianfrancesco was not slow to take up the offer. On Saturday, 15 June his lieutenant Antonio Gattego was sent to receive the fealty of Asola while Mantuan troops occupied the area,<sup>164/</sup> which included the castles of Remedello, Casalmoro, Casalpoglio, Casaloldo, Castelnuovo and Volongo. On 23 June the official terms were drawn up in which, under Gianfrancesco's ultimate authority, the Asolani were to retain most of their privileges and customs and guaranteed them special trading rights with Mantua.<sup>165/</sup> This guaranteed a period of greater stability for the area which remained very loyal to Gianfrancesco until 1438. At the end of the month Francesco Sforza did try to regain Asola. He camped just outside the town at Lavachiello hoping that the population would rally to him. In this he was deluded and because the relief of Brescia was a more pressing objective, he retreated on 2 July after having sacked Remedello 'en route' to the Bresciano.<sup>166/</sup> From now on the inhabitants were to make a valuable contribution to the Mantuan war effort, not only in Gianfrancesco's army, but also in construction work which was in progress in the Mantovano.<sup>167/</sup>

The Doge was delighted at Gianfrancesco's acquisition of the area. His letter of 16 June reflects this and he also declared his intention to allow Gianfrancesco to keep these territories.<sup>168/</sup> In fact, on 16 March 1428 Gianfrancesco was formally invested with Asola and its adjacent territories by Venice as a gesture of gratitude for Gianfrancesco's valuable contribution to the war effort.<sup>169/</sup> However, behind the affable sentiments expressed

in these documents lay a very real purpose. Such encouragement and reward was a deliberate act of policy on Venice's part in order to strengthen the relationship with Mantua still further, and in so doing, to strengthen Venice's own position in Lombardy.

Even before the siege of Brescia had been completed, the direction of the war was changing for Venice. The relative ease with which operations in the Bresciano and Cremonese had been carried out fired Venetian ambitions and was transforming what had been intended as a defensive war into an aggressive and acquisitive war. Not only did this affect the relationship with Carmagnola, and later on with Gianfrancesco; but it also affected the relationship with Florence.

Florence had pursued cautious and defensive war aims; the elimination of Milanese influence in Tuscany and Romagna and the checking of Milanese hegemony in Northern Italy. As these aims were gradually achieved the Florentines were becoming increasingly suspicious that Milanese hegemony was beginning to be replaced by a Venetian preponderance of power.<sup>170/</sup> To Filippo Maria, too, this was an alarming possibility. He was threatened on the Sesia as well as the Adda; Bergamo was endangered along with the Ghiaradadda. Moreover Sigismund could offer nothing but words because he had troubles of his own in Bohemia.

Of course, the Florentines still made a valuable contribution to the efforts against Brescia. This was especially true of Tolentino, who was an expert in field fortifications and earthworks. The double trench dug around the city under his direction was designed to completely cut off the besieged from outside help. It was a long and difficult task and the time taken to complete it has been variously estimated at between two and four months.<sup>171/</sup>

Tolentino's relationship with Carmagnola, however, was not very harmonious. It has been suggested that there was a conflict of personalities between them,<sup>172/</sup> and that Tolentino was not at all pleased with the pressure being exerted upon him by Carmagnola to complete the fortifications as quickly as possible. Matters were made worse by the lack of supplies for the allies. As late as October, Gianfrancesco was complaining of this to his wife.<sup>173/</sup> It was not surprising, therefore, that tempers tended to get somewhat frayed and Gianfrancesco spent some time trying to compose the differences between the two men, and seems to have achieved some success,<sup>174/</sup> although it could be argued that this discord was symptomatic of the disillusionment which the Florentines generally were beginning to feel about the way the war was going.

By this time the Milanese were aware of the formidable nature of Carmagnola's partnership with Gianfrancesco. It did become part of Milanese policy to try to split them up, and this was attempted in basically two ways. In July Filippo Maria ordered Della Pergola, who up to this time had been relatively inactive in Lombardy, to launch a raid into the Mantovano in order to see whether or not Gianfrancesco could be drawn away from Brescia.<sup>175/</sup> This tactic was to be employed later on in 1438 by the Venetians themselves. The chroniclers agree that the raid was particularly vicious and a considerable amount of damage was inflicted.<sup>176/</sup> Such a campaign would surely indicate Filippo Maria's estimate of Gianfrancesco's worth; but it did not succeed. It was very difficult to sustain such efforts while the whole major question of Brescia itself had not been finally settled. Although Possevino does mention an engagement between Gianfrancesco and Della Pergola, there is no evidence that Gianfrancesco ever left the siege of Brescia.<sup>177/</sup> Platina does mention,



however, that Carmagnola moved against him, leaving Gianfrancesco temporarily in charge of the siege.<sup>178/</sup> A lack of documentary evidence about this makes it difficult to reach any definite conclusion.

Another way was by repeated efforts to win Carmagnola back to his old allegiance. In fact, Filippo Maria never slackened in his efforts to do this and by so doing Carmagnola's position and credit with the Venetian Senate was compromised. There is a very good example of this in June 1426 when such an attempt to get Carmagnola to mediate with Venice was reported to the Senate.<sup>179/</sup> Although the Senate instructed Carmagnola to give no credence to Filippo Maria's words and Carmagnola, for his part, was very anxious to affirm his loyalty to Venice, such events only tended to make the Senate more suspicious of his motives and this generally resulted in even closer supervision by the provveditori which in turn tended to anger Carmagnola more and more. He was forbidden to communicate in any way with the Milanese. As this phase of the war wore on, Venetian strictures in this respect were to become more and more onerous.

In fact, Filippo Maria was not only trying to get Carmagnola to mediate on his behalf, he also tried to work through Niccolò d'Este and Gianfrancesco. There is even a reference to his making approaches to Paola,<sup>180/</sup> a strong indication of how important a role she played in the background of these wars. In fact, it was she who generally took charge of her husband's affairs during his absences from Mantua, forwarding important correspondence and money and, in the later stages of the war, conducting a very full correspondence on her own account. Gianfrancesco was never to trust anybody else as much as her; and this meant that she had to remain in the city often for fairly long periods of time.<sup>181/</sup>

Despite Gianfrancesco's presence in Brescia, this did not mean that he neglected the security of other parts of the Mantovano. In fact, his ambassadors had been, and were still, very active in conducting negotiations with a number of the smaller adjacent lords. Just like Filippo Maria, he also, at the behest of Venice, was using diplomatic channels even as hostilities were in progress.

In the previous March Gianfrancesco's secretary Giovanni Tomeo Donesmondi had concluded a successful truce with Francesco della Mirandola and the Coreggio brothers Gerardo, Galeazzo and Gilberto on behalf of the league.<sup>182/</sup> However, one of Gianfrancesco's main objectives was Guido Torello. This was to be a continuing theme throughout the course of the war. Because of the strategic advantages of Guastalla, Gianfrancesco never gave up attempts to secure the friendship of Guido Torello, and the truce of one month concluded with him on 2 July 1426 is the first of a long series. Because the proximity of Guastalla to Mantua made him inclined to temporise wherever possible, Torello could also be used by Filippo Maria as another instrument of appeasement at a time when he was beginning to despair at any prospect of help.

At the beginning of July Gianfrancesco sent instructions from Brescia to his two ambassadors Giovanni da Crema and Galeazzo da Gonzaga to confer with Bernardo de'Albertanis on Torello's behalf over the prospects of a truce. The final agreement included a mutual suspension of hostilities for the month of July together with guarantees of freedom of navigation along the Po.<sup>183/</sup> At the same time another truce was signed which protected Feltrino de Gonzaga's interests in Bagnolo and Nuvolera.<sup>184/</sup>

However, the siege of Brescia continued its weary course throughout the summer of 1426 and the Senate was getting more and more irritated at this seemingly endless position of stalemate.<sup>185/</sup> Although matters seemed to move very slowly indeed the Venetians did begin to make more progress in August and September when the Rocca di Porta Pile and the Porta Garzetta were captured.<sup>186/</sup> By following up these successes very rapidly the pressure on the weakened Milanese forces became so great that the old and new citadels surrendered on 14 and 28 September respectively. Despite a last ditch attack by Sforza and Piccinino on 16 September, the only barrier to total control over Brescia was the castle itself, obstinately defended by Antonio de Landriano.<sup>187/</sup>

It was at this crucial stage that Carmagnola once again asked leave to attend the baths at Abano. The Senate was not surprisingly shocked and tried to get Michiel and Pietro Loredano to dissuade him. However, his health at this time seems to have taken a turn for the worse, and in the end the Senate had reluctantly to agree to his request. Once again Gianfrancesco was left in command, but on this occasion the Senate instructed him and the provveditori to proceed with extreme caution in such a delicate situation.<sup>188/</sup>

This second absence of Carmagnola's only lasted about 20 days, but it occurred at the point when the surrender of the castle was imminent. Carmagnola's last operations before his departure on 20 October were the capture of Montechiari and Carpendedolo. This was yet another opportunity for Gianfrancesco to prove his worth. On this occasion he had one single purpose: concentration of every ounce of his military strength on the fortress, and once again he addressed himself to the task with characteristic

energy and determination. By now his grip on the fortress was growing unbearable and Landriano had no more resources to draw upon. In fact it has been suggested that Landriano had virtually agreed to surrender within a stipulated time if help did not arrive.<sup>189/</sup> On 23 October Gianfrancesco wrote to his wife that, after a slow start due to the lack of resources, the bombardment was going extremely well.<sup>190/</sup> On the previous day Foscari had sent him a letter of encouragement emphasising that Venice had every confidence in his abilities.<sup>191/</sup>

Finally, on 20 November, after what had seemed to be an interminable period, Landriano surrendered to Carmagnola. This was justifiably hailed as a tremendous breakthrough and there were great festivities in Venice and Mantua. However, Gianfrancesco had played a far more important role in the final months of the siege than has been credited to him. His tightening of control in the end, combined with the weakening of Landriano's resolve had finally achieved their purpose.<sup>192/</sup> In effect, it is very difficult to credit Carmagnola with the achievement of the surrender of the castle because he had only returned to the siege on 19 November.<sup>193/</sup> As in the past he arrived to take control of a situation which had largely been created by Gianfrancesco. In fact, we have seen that the crucial moments in the whole siege of Brescia had been supervised, and supervised very effectively, by Gianfrancesco; and it is worth noting that it was a siege which Machiavelli was to praise highly.<sup>194/</sup> All that Carmagnola had to do in effect was to accept the submission of Landriano and disperse his troops into winter quarters in the Bresciano as he had been instructed by the Senate.

All in all, on the basis of the evidence available, the successful outcome of the whole campaign had shown the Senate that Carmagnola's failing health would lead them to place a greater degree of responsibility upon Gianfrancesco, a responsibility which he had shown himself willing and capable of bearing. In addition to this, Gianfrancesco's enthusiastic conduct of the war had confirmed how right Venice was in seeking to identify its own policy with Mantua's security.

It was the fall of Brescia which hastened the peace negotiations which up to this point had been proceeding in a somewhat desultory fashion. The Pope was quite prepared to mediate and his appointment of Cardinal Albergati was a wise choice. The agreement which was reached on 30 December 1426 after some tough bargaining, however, proved to be nothing more than a breathing space.<sup>195/</sup> Even a cursory glance at the terms eventually agreed upon would indicate that this would never provide a permanent solution. Florence gained precious little, but to reach agreement they were even prepared to sacrifice their interests in Genoa; in fact there were frequent brushes between Florence and Venice over the question of the Valcamonica. The cost of the war had been crippling for Florence and these negotiations demonstrated just how much the two allies were drifting apart. The Venetians had been confirmed in all the territories they had acquired in the Bresciano with the stipulation that Filippo Maria should vacate all fortresses in this area. Gianfrancesco was given possession of the fortress of Isola Dovarese. The border with the Mantovano had therefore been made more secure; but Venice had also taken the first steps in territorial expansion across the Lombard plain.

The Milanese, however, could never tolerate a continued Venetian presence in the Bresciano and the Valcamonica, and to acquiescence in such a state of affairs was an affront to Filippo Maria's 'amour-propre' as well as to Milanese morale generally. Anyhow, Filippo still hoped for aid from Sigismund<sup>196/</sup> and was convinced that he could still win back Savoy. It was no wonder that the warfare became endemic when such large territorial issues were at stake. Filippo Maria needed only the slightest pretext on which to renew hostilities and the war was to re-open when he repeatedly refused to honour the treaty by ceding to Venice the castles which he still held in the Bresciano.<sup>197/</sup> Anyhow, on 27 January 1427 the Senate sent Tommaso Malipiero to Brescia with instructions to Carmagnola to start making military preparations once again.<sup>198/</sup> By the beginning of February Albergati, frustrated by the patent insincerity of the signatories of the peace, returned to Rome.<sup>199/</sup>

The pattern of warfare was basically unaltered, with the same emphasis upon the correlation of river and land forces. However, on this occasion the Viscontean forces commanded by Piccinino and Della Pergola were better prepared and the commanders were in fuller agreement with each other. As far as Milan was concerned this war was one for survival, and to this end Filippo Maria issued a number of exhortations to his Milanese subjects to do their best to make up for previous humiliations.<sup>200/</sup> The euphoria of such pronouncements was in stark contrast to the grim penalties for those who were disloyal.<sup>201/</sup>

The initial Milanese successes in Val Caleppio, Toricelle and Casalmaggiore in March may once again have been helped by Carmagnola's absence for a third time at Abano. On this occasion he spent some 20 days taking the waters, returning to Mantua on or around 15 April. As in the

previous year, Mantua was the centre of operations and Gianfrancesco's own interests were very much affected by the opening moves of the ducal forces. In fact, Gianfrancesco had never really been impressed with the peace treaty of December and had been anticipating an escalation of the situation for some time. On 14 March in a letter to his wife, who at that time was staying with her father, Gianfrancesco asked her to return to Mantua as quickly as possible because of his imminent departure for Venice.<sup>202/</sup> He was asked to go to Venice in order to confer over military preparations and was impatient to leave because of the seriousness of the situation.<sup>203/</sup>

Once again, then, Carmagnola had asked for leave of absence at a crucial point in the affairs of Venice. Three fairly lengthy visits to Abano during a relatively short period caused the Venetians to feel increasingly uneasy about their military commander. The date of his departure for Abano is not certain, but it must have been during the first two weeks of March. Redusio cites the 10th.<sup>204/</sup> It is therefore very interesting to correlate this date with that of Gianfrancesco's summons to Venice. It could be argued that this is an indication that the Senate was turning increasingly to Gianfrancesco for advice on points of military importance. There is little doubt that the month of March 1427 was a very important one indeed as far as military preparations were concerned, even before the Milanese siege of Casalmaggiore began on 28 March.

Gianfrancesco in particular was continuing to pursue negotiations with Guido Torello in order to extend the truce that had already been signed in the previous year. On 16 March a further truce was arranged which guaranteed a free passage of the Venetian fleet through the territory of Guastalla (while negotiations were proceeding).<sup>205/</sup> On the following day Niccolò d'Este ratified an agreement which had been reached by Gianfrancesco,

on behalf of the league, with Francesco and Giovanni della Mirandola and the Coreggio brothers.<sup>206/</sup> Gianfrancesco's faithful secretary Giovanni da Crema continued negotiating with Mirandola until well into April at the behest of Este, in order to obtain the best possible conditions.<sup>207/</sup> Such agreements were of as vital concern to the security of the Mantovano as they were to the interests of the league.

Venice was also trying to use Paola's position to its own advantage. On 18 March Gianfrancesco was at Luzzara, probably supervising the military preparations and he had sent a letter to Venice giving up to date information about military and diplomatic developments. But Gianfrancesco was also considering another plan at this time, which he suggested to the Doge in his letter. His mind had obviously been turning for some time now on what he considered to be the anomalous position of Carlo Malatesta in Milanese service, and he was considering the feasibility of using his father-in-law's influence in order to try to woo Carlo away from the Milanese alliance; a plan which the Venetians heartily approved of in their reply of 22 March.<sup>208/</sup> Although this plan never achieved any success, the suggestion was nevertheless a very politic move by Gianfrancesco. Even thus far Venice's relationship with Carmagnola had been somewhat chequered, primarily because there were suspicions of him dealing with the enemy. Carlo Malatesta's position in Milan must have been a considerable embarrassment for Gianfrancesco, and he was frightened lest the least taint of suspicion should fall on him. After all in the previous year even Filippo Maria himself had made approaches to Paola in his efforts for peace. This suggestion, then, could be interpreted as another attempt by Gianfrancesco to assure the Venetians of his continuing loyalty. In fact, as far as Venice was concerned, there was no doubt of this; but such an interpretation may provide some clue as to the way in which Gianfrancesco's mind was working at the time.



The siege of Casalmaggiore by the Milanese river fleet was amply supported by the land forces of Piccinino and Della Pergola, and the Venetian forces, largely dispersed throughout the Bresciano, needed reorganising. It was, therefore, an especially difficult task for Gianfrancesco, and the Venetians recognised this. On 12 April, just three days before Carmagnola returned to Mantua from Abano, they wrote to Gianfrancesco and urged him to take care not to commit himself unless he was sure of success. In particular he was urged not to attempt a river engagement with the Milanese fleet which was commanded, despite Gianfrancesco's diplomacy, by Torello, unless there was a "magno avantagio et prerogative armate nostre".<sup>209/</sup> Gianfrancesco was instructed to liaise with the provveditori<sup>210/</sup> and provide as much security as was possible. In addition to this the Senate elected to send Andrea Donato as a special envoy to consult directly with Gianfrancesco and to keep it informed of every new development.<sup>211/</sup> It also promised to send four more galleys as quickly as possible. There is also a hint that the Florentines were not quite pulling their weight. In fact, it was urging the Florentine ambassador Marcello Strozzi to hurry up preparations.

In fact, the Venetians were urging Gianfrancesco to hold his fire until a proper muster of troops had been organised, and this occurred almost immediately after Carmagnola's return to the Mantovano.<sup>212/</sup> The Senate tried to hurry Carmagnola up after an army of 16,000 cavalry and 6,000 infantry had been gathered together and after plans with Gianfrancesco and Michiel had been finalised.<sup>213/</sup>

However, while discussions over the feasibility of a land rather than a river campaign were under way, the Milanese captured Casalmaggiore on 29 April and sailed on towards Brescello. The failure to retain Casalmaggiore was a grave blow and Carmagnola was accused of acting too slowly, despite his complaints of a shortage of supplies. In fact, it could be argued that from this point Carmagnola's relations with the Senate began their long period of decline, while Gianfrancesco ever seemed to be the star in the ascendant. Certainly there was a stark contrast between Casalmaggiore and the surprising success at Brescello where Gianfrancesco together with Contarini, Michiel and Bembo defeated Pasino Eustachio, the ducal fleet commander even in the face of a land attack from Piccinino.<sup>214/</sup> This permitted an attack on Cremona and Bembo even aimed at Pavia but was later forced to retire to Brescello again. However, the banks of the Oglio were now threatened by the Venetians.

Under the supervision of the two new provveditori Morosini and Michiel, the campaigns of May and June were directed towards securing the Venetian position in the Bresciano. Gianfrancesco was involved in this together with Carmagnola and Tolentino. On 19 May they tried in vain to recapture Montechiari but succeeded in such places as Calvisano, Quinzano, Longhena, Orcivecchi, Codignano, Pompiano, Verola and Macclodio.<sup>215/</sup> These were all areas bordering on the Mantovano.

Despite the setback at Gottolengo<sup>216/</sup> the Venetian forces gradually pushed forwards towards the Oglio and Binanova was an important staging point for this. Judging from the dates of Gianfrancesco's letters to Paola, mainly requests for money, we can see that his movements follow exactly those of Carmagnola.<sup>217/</sup> It would seem that he was present at the recapture

of Casalmaggiore on 5 July, and was also charged with patrolling and protecting the crossing points over the Oglio into the Cremonese.

During these months Gianfrancesco had been involved on his own account at Sabbioneta. After the capture of Asola in the previous year Gianfrancesco had been anxious to incorporate Sabbioneta which had been assigned to Giorgio, Giacomino and Rinaldo Persico by Filippo Maria on 3 January 1422. It would appear that this had been done deliberately to prevent any encroachments by Gianfrancesco. In fact the Persico had insisted on the inclusion of Rivarolo Dentro, Commessaggio and San Martino delle Argine for this very reason.<sup>218/</sup> In a sense the possession of Sabbioneta arose naturally from Asola and Viadana, and was also the logical extension of the campaigns against Casalmaggiore and Brescello.

The campaign to expell the Persico had been going on since April. On the 25th there had been an engagement with Mantuan troops near Castel Fusano. A Mantuan counter-attack pursued the enemy into the marshy Valle di Casalbellotto where many Sabbionettani were killed including Rinaldo and Giorgio Persico. However, owing to the exigencies of consolidating gains in the Bresciano Sabbioneta itself was not captured until 1 July after a short siege. The valour and initiative which Gianfrancesco displayed in this campaign was amply recognised by Venice and he was granted immediate possession of the area.<sup>219/</sup> In the peace of 7 June 1431 Filippo Maria recognised Gianfrancesco's rights in Viadana and Sabbioneta.<sup>220/</sup>

These campaigns to the south-west of Mantua were very important for Gianfrancesco's security and Carmagnola's intention to consolidate his gains in the Cremonese was very valid from a military point of view; this

was certainly true of the recapture of Casalmaggiore. Unfortunately the Venetian Senate did not think that Carmagnola was pressing forward with enough determination.

The gravity of the Milanese situation in the summer of 1427 was such that the Senate wanted a strong onslaught against the fortress of Pizzighettone on the Adda. The campaigns in the Cremonese did not satisfy the Senate, especially as it considered that the size of the army, which consisted at this time of some 22,000 cavalry, 8,000 infantry and 6,000 'cerne' was sufficient for the task. It was also somewhat disturbed by the mercy he was showing to prisoners of war which, incidentally, were kept initially in Mantua, and this was a point which was to be reiterated with even greater persistence after Macclodio. Even Gianfrancesco, a faithful supporter of Carmagnola in his military policy, was at odds with him over this point. The new provveditori Fantino Michiel and Leonardo Mocenigo were given instructions to approach Gianfrancesco in order to get him to encourage Carmagnola either to cross the Adda or to strengthen his position around Pizzighettone.<sup>221/</sup> It also seemed that his intention or ordering troops into winter quarters in early September was cutting the campaigning season unnecessarily short, especially since he was in a position to make such headway against the enemy.

It is not easy to explain Carmagnola's actions here, but they cannot be wholly attributed to illness or age. It is easy to agree with the criticisms of the Senate, especially over the question of winter quarters, but there must have been a valid military reason for his actions. The Senate had, as we have seen, been prosecuting the war with increasing vigour and it may well be that Carmagnola considered that Venetian 'raison

d'état' was moving too quickly for military prudence. While it was important to capture important centres such as Brescia and Pizzighettone, it was also important to secure the surrounding territory. This may well explain the methodical, but relatively minor military activities in this period.<sup>222/</sup> Anyhow, Carmagnola tended to move with caution at the best of times and was unwilling to risk his men unnecessarily.<sup>223/</sup> There was about this, as well as about the freeing of prisoners of war, some of the old condottiere mentality which accorded ill with the 'imperialistic' policies of the state. It has been important to raise these points about Carmagnola's relations with Venice because not only was Gianfrancesco's immediate position affected by them, but these were precisely the problems which he was to face himself later on.

In fact, there was a fierce eight hour engagement at Pizzighettone on 30 July which ended indecisively although the chronicler Possevino does remark that in the dusty confusion of battle, Carmagnola was thrown from his horse and was rescued by Gianfrancesco in the midst of the enemy.<sup>224/</sup> The outcome of this encounter, perhaps tended to back-up Carmagnola's contention that the Venetians were not yet ready for a thrust across the Adda.

As well as supporting Carmagnola's operations in July, Gianfrancesco was once again given the task of winning over people who were discontented with Viscontean rule. At the end of the month Orlando Pallavicino of Busseto had made tentative approaches to Carmagnola about defecting to the Venetians.<sup>225/</sup> When Carmagnola relayed this information to the Senate it was they who referred the whole matter to Gianfrancesco. The final agreement was reached on 23 July whereby Pallavicino promised to declare himself openly

for Venice within a month and would give all possible aid to the Venetian Po fleet, in return for his aggregation to the Venetian nobility and the promise that all his property would be restored to him which had previously been confiscated by the Milanese.<sup>226/</sup>

Despite Venetian criticisms Carmagnola continued his policy of consolidation throughout the month of August, and achieved a considerable degree of success. Most of the operations took place between B'nanova which the ducal forces had re-taken, and Quinzano. At Gottolengo, at the end of August, Gianfrancesco managed to revenge the previous defeat there. In a fierce battle against the ducal troops, commanded ironically by Carlo Malatesta, he managed to drive back the enemy and capture the town. On 27 August the Doge wrote congratulating Gianfrancesco on his efforts.<sup>227/</sup> It is, perhaps, an interesting comment on the situation that Carmagnola was described as 'socium laboris tui'. It was clear that the Venetians came increasingly to look on Gianfrancesco as the only man who could spur Carmagnola on to greater action; hence the obsession with constant consultation between the two men over the plans of campaign.

Even if the Senate was critical of the way in which the war was being conducted it was not apparent to Filippo Maria, however, that there was any appreciable lessening of effort on the part of the Venetians. In his frequent letters to Sigismund he revealed the desperate nature of the Milanese situation.<sup>228/</sup> This tended to encourage a more determined effort to secure Savoy, which had deliberately abstained from renewing hostilities in 1427. However, the terms which the opportunist Amedeo imposed for his adherence were very tough indeed, and revealed the full

extent of his selfish ambitions. Not only did he want Filippo Maria to marry his daughter, but he also wanted possession of Asti and Vercelli; demands which Filippo only hoped to escape if Sigismund were prepared to help. In fact, Amedeo has been courting both sides during this year. For instance, on 20 July his envoy Enrico de Colombiers was sent to Carmagnola, an occurrence which the Senate was not at all happy about. In fact, his subsequent mission to Venice was not a success. Filippo Maria's decision on 2 December to accede to Amedeo's requests is a powerful comment on how desperately he viewed his position, especially after he had tried delaying tactics with Venice by trying to re-open negotiations with them.<sup>229/</sup>

Filippo Maria's decision to accept the humiliating terms of Savoy was prompted by the success of the Venetians in the remaining months of this campaigning season. At the beginning of September Gianfrancesco was still in Binanova where the reconstruction of the fortifications was still in progress.<sup>230/</sup> Furthermore, on 9 September, in a letter to his wife, we learn that he was also supervising the question of supplies. After the recapture of Casalmaggiore and the river campaign of the previous months, the Venetian fleet was refitting. Francesco Bembo and Marino Contarini had written to Gianfrancesco about the necessity for experienced carpenters and sufficient supplies of wood to carry this out. He referred the matter to Paola, requesting her to appoint a responsible person to oversee these preparations.<sup>231/</sup>

Towards the end of September, the army moved away from Binanova into the Bresciano once again and the object of this expedition was the recapture of Montechiari which was so essential to the security both of Brescia and the northern sector of the Mantovano.<sup>232/</sup> It would seem

for once that the Senate approved of the move, probably because the campaigning season was nearly over and it would have been imprudent to attempt anything more ambitious. However, although the Senate was encouraging Carmagnola on 28 September, there was always now an undercurrent of suspicion in its attitude to the Captain General, and the tension caused by this, most likely through the close supervision of the provveditori, frequently demonstrated itself.

The siege of Montechiari did not go as well as Carmagnola had expected and by the beginning of October a number of his men were very anxious to retire into winter quarters in the Veronese. The Senate, however, did not approve of this move and, through Morosini, communicated to Carmagnola that it was anxious that a major offensive should be launched against the enemy before this dispersal of men should take place. It is also clear that Gianfrancesco felt the same way because he was not at all happy about a strong Milanese presence in an area which still constituted a relatively weak link in his chain of defences. In fact, relations between Gianfrancesco and Carmagnola at the siege of Montechiari were not always of the best. It did not require much perception for Carmagnola to see that while he had frequently suffered the censure of the Senate for his slowness of action, the Venetians had almost gone out of their way to praise Gianfrancesco's actions. This undercurrent of jealousy showed itself in minor matters. Gianfrancesco became irritated at the fact that Carmagnola had not consulted him over the question of negotiations with the besieged, and moreover that he had imposed restrictions on the movements of his men. Matters became so strained that the Senate instructed Morosini to try and calm things down,<sup>233/</sup> and persuade Carmagnola that it was not, in fact, showing any undue favouritism towards Gianfrancesco. This was very reminiscent of Gianfrancesco's relations with Piccinino in 1438. Anyhow, Morosini's



mission seems to have worked because Montechiari was finally taken on 8 October and on the following day the army moved off towards the Oglio in the direction of Macclodio; and it was here that one of the major encounters took place between the two opposing armies on 11 October.<sup>234/</sup> This battle demonstrated that, despite his failing health, Carmagnola was still capable of the occasional flash of genius. It was a resounding testimony to Carmagnola's military expertise and, from a technical point of view, it was a classic of its kind. It was certainly significant as far as later fifteenth century developments were concerned and it would be useful to pause here and consider the reasons why this is the case.

Macclodio is yet another example in this war of the successful use of terrain in which Carmagnola sought out the most advantageous ground and drew his enemy in such a way as to force them to fight on disadvantageous terms. In fact, this was the very strategy which Diomedes Carafa was to enlarge upon nearly 200 years later.<sup>235/</sup> Carmagnola had made careful preparations and the tactics he employed show this encounter to be, in reality, a well-planned ambush. Carmagnola chose the most advantageous position for himself on otherwise marshy ground and used every inducement to draw his enemy onto the marshes. Such swampy conditions and the autumn mists would be a decided advantage to troops which had been favourably placed before the action began. There were men concealed on all sides so that the enemy could be surrounded when it was enticed sufficiently far into the swampy terrain. Carmagnola even had raised causeways built to tempt the enemy into a position where it would be most vulnerable to the line of fire, which consisted in large part of crossbows mounted in threes. Both Tolentino and Gianfrancesco commanded a reserve army of about 2,000 to prevent any retreat.<sup>236/</sup>

The Milanese commander Carlo Malatesta fell for the trap that had been so carefully prepared for him and the battle turned into a rout. Surrounded on all sides the ducal troops were thrown into complete disorder and many sought refuge in flight. The Venetian army gave chase and pursued the defeated army as far as Orcinuvovi on the Oglio.

Once again, the technical expertise of Tolentino contributed a great deal to the victory, but so did Gianfrancesco. In charge of a detachment of cavalry, his vigorous attacks upon the enemy had been very effective indeed.<sup>237/</sup>

In a letter to Sigismund, Filippo Maria summed the situation up perfectly: "in qua confusione plurimis ex nostris remansere captivos (around 8,000) et una cum eis magnificus locumtenens noster Carolus Malatesta; sed ceteri omnes capitanei et ductores nostri evaserunt."<sup>238/</sup> However, although this battle was a grave setback to Milanese fortunes and was significant from a technical point of view; in purely material terms its importance has been overestimated. The release of prisoners of war either on the same night or on the next day certainly shows the old condottiere mentality, and the restitution of the men and their commanders could be taken to detract from the ultimate impact of the battle; but although there may have been some murmurings by the Venetian Senate and the Florentines, Carmagnola could hardly have been expected to keep prisoners in close captivity for any length of time and the fact that the Mantovano was the most convenient place to keep them could not have been gratifying to Gianfrancesco. At least arms and ammunition had been captured, even though it is surprising how quickly these were refurbished by Milan when the liberated troops returned to active service.

The fate of Carlo Malatesta was once again an embarrassment for Gianfrancesco. The Senate reserved the right to dispose of the most important prisoners. His movements after his capture are none too clear, although it is highly probable that he was transferred to Venice. Platina states that he was then transferred to Mantua due to the intercession of Gianfrancesco but was only subsequently released after the peace had been concluded in 1428.<sup>239/</sup> There is, however, no documentary evidence to bear this out.

When the news of the victory reached Venice on 15 October there were great celebrations,<sup>240/</sup> and two days later Giorgio Cornaro and Sante Venier were sent to the army to offer the congratulations of the Senate on such a glorious victory.<sup>241/</sup> This was precisely the sort of achievement which Venice wanted to close the campaigning season with.

As always, the Senate was anxious to show its appreciation in material terms, and this victory was to bring its rewards for Carmagnola and Gianfrancesco. Carmagnola was granted Pandolfo Malatesta's former house in Venice together with the possession of Castenedolo in the Bresciano. Gianfrancesco, too, was rewarded with what was described as a 'beautiful and honourable house' on the Grand Canal at S. Pantaleone valued at 6,500 ducats; a reward which demonstrated how highly his services in the events of the battle were regarded.<sup>242/</sup> This, as well shall see, was supplemented by grants of land in the peace of Ferrara in the following year.

The Senate, however, soon complained that the battle of Macclodio was never effectively followed up before the Milanese could remarshal their forces. There was still the possibility of being able to cross the

Adda and take the war into the Milanese itself<sup>243/</sup> or at least to concentrate on the area around Treviglio and the Ghiaradadda. However, Carmagnola was never contemplating an extreme action. In fact, there is nothing to suggest that Carmagnola considered Macclodio as being of any outstanding significance. As always, he demonstrated a firm grasp of realistic military objectives and his actions after Macclodio can be seen as a further consolidation of occupied territory before retiring into winter quarters.<sup>244/</sup>

In fact, by December 1427 Filippo Maria was in an almost identical position as in the previous year with the Venetians in possession of the entire Bresciano and considerable portions of the Bergamasco and Cremonese.<sup>245/</sup> As far as he was concerned the time had come for another truce in which to take stock of what had happened and to try again to construct a network of alliances. Florence was also tired of wars which did not benefit her and Martin V now became increasingly alarmed at the extent of the Venetian acquisitions. Only Venice proved rather more reluctant to negotiate; the taste for acquisition had turned to greed for more, but even here an interval was clearly desirable if only to reassemble and overhaul its forces in preparation for the next period of hostilities. After all, the cost of such a war had to be considered. In fact, it has been estimated that up to the beginning of 1428 the war had cost 2,500,000 ducats.<sup>246/</sup>

At the beginning of November Alberghati once more mediated in discussions between the two sides at Ferrara. The fact that an agreement was not reached until the April of the following year is itself an indication of the difficult and often frustrating wranglings which took place.

Although Gianfrancesco was not personally involved in the negotiations, he was concerned very much with their results. During the course of the lengthy and involved discussions he was kept constantly informed by his close friend and colleague Niccolò d'Este of developments. In the detailed correspondence which survives for this period, it is possible to trace the development of the eventual peace proposals.

During December of 1427 Gianfrancesco turned back to Mantua,<sup>248/</sup> but at least on once occasion he was in Venice. Not only would it be easier to keep track of events in Ferrara, but the Senate would also be able to consult him on matters of common interest. There is every indication that Gianfrancesco was very anxious to capitalise upon the high esteem in which he was held in Venice. This would partly account for Gianfrancesco's plan to discuss the possibilities of his son Ludovico joining Venetian service.

On 30 December he wrote to Paola to inform her how pleased he was that the Venetians had agreed to his proposal. With both father and son actively involved in the interests of Venice there could be little doubt of the loyalty of Mantua in the years to come.<sup>249/</sup> It is perhaps no mere coincidence that this occurred at a time when the Venetians were expected to be protecting Mantua interests at Ferrara.

From the beginning the peace conference was beset with difficulties; in fact it was an achievement to get the discussions started in the first place. On 21 November Este wrote to Gianfrancesco complaining of the delays and including in his letter copies of the Milanese ambassadors'

requests, which at that time were irreconcilable with the demands of the allies.<sup>250/</sup> The Milanese had no intention of surrendering their possessions in the Bresciano and Bergamasco; in fact they demanded that they should be returned "in pristinum statum".<sup>251/</sup>

On 29 November, the situation remained unchanged, with neither side prepared to give way at all, especially the Venetians who were regarded by the Milanese ambassadors as the real aggressors in the war,<sup>252/</sup> a telling comment on the new orientation of the Lombard wars.

It was certainly the case that even while the negotiations were in progress the Venetians were still holding on as strongly as ever to their acquisitions in the Bresciano and Bergamasco and were concentrating on taking as many small fortresses in the area as possible.

In February 1428, after a somewhat uncomfortable winter with his family in Brescia, Carmagnola for the third time requested leave to go to Abano. On 23 February the Senate agreed willingly to his request, but on this occasion asked specifically that he should write to Gianfrancesco informing him that he was to assume temporary command of the city and of the troops in the Bergamasco.<sup>253/</sup> Gianfrancesco was to be assisted in Brescia by Pietro Loredan. Carmagnola was not to return to Brescia until 29 April, well after the peace was concluded. Nothing of any consequence occurred during Gianfrancesco's third tenure of command. Such operations as there were, were very small scale with the Venetians trying to prevent Piccinino taking small castles in the valleys of the Bergamasco.

The period immediately before the signing of the peace was an anxious time for Gianfrancesco, but if he had any doubts as to whether or not Venice had his interests at heart, these doubts were dispelled by the official investiture with all the lands he had captured during the course of the war around the area of Asola. <sup>254/</sup> All this was completed on 16 March and was confirmed in the following May. <sup>255/</sup>

When the agreement at Ferrara was finally reached on 17 April, <sup>256/</sup> it was clear that this was again not a solution to the war. On 22 April Este confidentially sent a copy of the terms to Gianfrancesco and piously hoped that this would see an end to the conflict. <sup>257/</sup> Venice kept the Bresciano and nearly all the Bergamasco together with important footholds in the Cremonese and Filippo Maria was to promise not to interfere in the affairs of Tuscany and Romagna again. Visconti could never reconcile himself to such heavy losses. In a letter of 30 May 1428 to Sigismund he affirmed that an agreement made under such duress could not really be binding. Similarly, Venice had not completed her territorial aims; there were still gaps along the river Adda - Caravaggio, Lecco, Treviglio and the Ghiaradadda. In these respects the terms of Ferrara contain the germs of future conflict. Moreover, the Milanese presence in the Cremonese, and especially around Toricella, meant that Gianfrancesco could never relax his vigilance because this area directly threatened Casalmaggiore. <sup>259/</sup> In addition to this Filippo Maria's untiring efforts to win over Carmagnola continued to be a matter of grave concern to the Venetians, especially as policy was now increasingly directed towards an overt expansion into the Milanese.

#### IV

##### The Downfall of Carmagnola

In the years up to the peace of Ferrara we have seen that Gianfrancesco played an important role, not only in ably assisting Carmagnola, but also in demonstrating promising qualities of leadership and initiative. Over the next three years, however, he maintained a much lower profile, although he was not completely inactive.

Anyhow, the peace of Ferrara was followed by two rather uneasy years of armed peace, and it was only a question of time before the war started up again. Even as early as October 1428 Venice sent Giorgio Cornaro to Milan to complain about Filippo Maria's reinforcing of his frontiers and his continually threatening behaviour towards the Pallavicini and Arcelli. It may be said, however, that Venice was guilty of similar action, and the summer of 1428 saw the fortifications of such centres as Bina, Iseo and Montechiari, all areas with which Gianfrancesco was intimately concerned. During this period Gianfrancesco's role was what it had been in the early twenties, of exercising a considerable amount of vigilance along the border areas and reporting the slightest movements to Venice.

The Venetians were also active on Gianfrancesco's behalf in other areas. It is important to remember that one of Gianfrancesco's dearest wishes was to obtain an Imperial title which had originally been granted to his father (in 1403) by Wenceslaus but which had been invalidated by the Emperor's deposition. In the Mantuan Chancery Minutes for 1428 there exists a copy of a letter which had originally been sent by Marco Dandolo who at that time was Venetian ambassador to Sigismund which deals with this very matter.



On 17 July a truce had been concluded between Sigismund and Venice which was to last for two years.<sup>260/</sup> This had largely come about owing to the rather unsuccessful war he had been waging against the Turks. Clearly Sigismund did not wish to have Venice as his enemy at this time. Venice, therefore, was in a position to capitalise upon this position and, anxious to show its concern for Gianfrancesco's interests in instructing Dandolo to confer with the Emperor over the question of the Marquisate.<sup>261/</sup>

Dandolo was urged to press very hard regarding this matter and to get Sigismund to agree to the same terms as Wenceslaus; and to this effect the Doge included a copy of the Privilege of 1402.<sup>262/</sup> These, therefore, were serious negotiations. The only stumbling block was the somewhat excessive price of 20,000 ducats which Sigismund was demanding. Dandolo was asked to try to beat the price down as much as possible - "vos autem habeatis omnem diligenciam et considerationem possibilem ac faciendum in hac re illam minorem expensiam quam poteritis".<sup>263/</sup> These negotiations were to proceed, on and off, for the next three or four years and, as we shall see in the next Chapter, it was largely due to the untiring efforts which Venice made that Gianfrancesco gained his Imperial title. It was such efforts which provided a powerful incentive for continued loyalty.

On Venice's part, as well, it became of paramount importance to keep Gianfrancesco as happy as possible when there was a further deterioration of relations with Carmagnola. It was in these years that the Senate, after showing remarkable patience, gradually came to the conclusion that Carmagnola was not the right man for the job of taking the expansion of the terraferma to its ultimate conclusion and turned instead to Gianfrancesco, who ironically took very little part in active campaigning.

The disillusionment tended to affect Carmagnola as well. His health was failing rather badly now, and this fact combined with the criticisms of the Senate, induced him to proffer his resignation in January 1429. It may well be that the occasional differences of opinion with Gianfrancesco played some part in the decision even though for the most part the relationship had been a cordial one.

This was a marvellous opportunity for the Senate. Why, then, did it refuse to accept his resignation?<sup>264/</sup> The question is not easy to answer because the public reasons which the Senate gave did not always reveal its true intentions. While it is true that his services had been valued highly, they were probably very suspicious of Carmagnola's intentions; after all Filippo Maria had been trying to get him back, and they were mindful of how valuable an asset a man who had been in command of the Venetian army could be to the enemy. In a very real sense Carmagnola was trapped, because the Senate could simply not afford to run this danger. This is why they got Gianfrancesco to intervene with Carmagnola on their behalf and it is to Gianfrancesco's credit that on 15 February Carmagnola agreed to renew his condotta with Venice on the same terms as before,<sup>265/</sup> but this time for 500 lances and with a provision of 500 ducats per month. In warfare of this nature there was a debit as well as a credit side to the job as military commander, and the fact that Gianfrancesco was to be very closely involved in Carmagnola's downfall, even though it was not through his own volition, was to have a profound psychological effect upon him. It may well be the case that during this period he began to see himself more and more as the next candidate for overall command and became increasingly apprehensive of finding himself in the same difficulties as Carmagnola.

The prominent part which Gianfrancesco had played in the wars up to this point had certainly raised his credit elsewhere in Italy. The fact that his standing in Venice was high tended to upgrade the value of his support in diplomacy and there were people who were willing to capitalise upon this. With negotiations well under way with Sigismund over the question of the Imperial title there can be little doubt that as far as personal reputation and the standing of his state was concerned, Gianfrancesco could afford to be well satisfied with his achievements. Although there could be no relaxation of vigilance on the western borders of the Mantovano, the more peaceful conditions which prevailed in this area, even when Filippo Maria temporarily turned his acquisitive eye on Tuscany in 1430, meant that he was more free to pursue the arts of peace and diplomacy. The presence of Vittorino da Feltre in Mantua had brought considerable prestige to the city and Gianfrancesco had for some time been anxious to develop this further by establishing a 'studium' in Mantua. Although documentary material on this point is rather sparse, it would seem that negotiations with Sigismund over this tended to parallel the discussion over the Marquisate.<sup>266/</sup> Anyhow Vittorino's activities at the 'Casa Giocosa' tended to attract some of the best teachers of his time in the fields of Grammar, Dialectic, Greek and Latin, and there are two references in the Gonzaga Archive for this period which deal with the appointment of teachers. In 1429 Gianfrancesco awarded Mantuan citizenship to Guglielmo da Caravaggio and in November 1431 he did the same for Bartolomeo Alboini della Volta, both teachers of Grammar.<sup>267/</sup> Gianfrancesco fully realised the importance of the prestige which such matters brought to Mantua not only within Italy but also abroad. During this period there were quite a number of requests to Gianfrancesco that children should be sent to Mantua for their education, something which he tended to encourage.<sup>268/</sup>

This was important, not only for its intrinsic merit, but also because it contributed to the total effect of Mantua's emergence at this period as an important nodal point in political terms in northern Italy. A very good example of this can be seen in the way in which Gianfrancesco's help was enlisted in 1429/30 in the difficulties which the Malatesta family was having with Pope Martin V at a time when he was actively involved in re-establishing papal power in the Romagna.

The trouble started with the death of Carlo Malatesta of Rimini on 14 September 1429.<sup>269/</sup> In the previous year he had reached an agreement with Martin over the disposal of his lands because he and his wife Elisabetta Varano were childless. Although it was settled with Martin that the inheritance should pass to the three illegitimate sons of Pandolfo Malatesta of Fano who had died in 1427, this was challenged both by Martin and Paola's father, Malatesta of Pesaro, after Carlo's death.<sup>270/</sup> Far from agreeing to the succession of Roberto, Sigismondo and Malatesta Novello, Martin declared the vicariates forfeit on the pretext of non-payment of Census.<sup>271/</sup>

All these people had been at one time or another very closely associated with Gianfrancesco and it was not unnatural that he should be involved in these affairs. On 28 October 1429 Leonello d'Este, Gianfrancesco's prospective son-in-law, wrote to Paola a very affectionate letter in which he sympathised with her worries over the situation and promised her that both he and his father Niccolò would do anything in their power to bring matters to a successful conclusion.<sup>272/</sup> Gianfrancesco was in a rather difficult position in that not only was there a conflict within his wife's family, but he did not want to unduly compromise his hitherto harmonious relations with Martin. The situation was partially eased by the death of Paola's father on 19 December 1429.

On 16 July 1430 Este wrote to Gianfrancesco about the difficulties of Elisabetta Varano's situation, of how the negotiations with Martin were beginning to drag and that she was anxious for Niccolò and Gianfrancesco to intervene in order to speed things up.<sup>273/</sup> Gianfrancesco's ambassador in Rimini at this time was Matteo Corrado, a very experienced man who was later to occupy the crucial position of Mantuan envoy to Milan some nine years later, and he was urging his master to use his influence.<sup>274/</sup> During this period Gianfrancesco's envoy to Rome, Francesco de Catabene, was certainly exercising some gentle influence on behalf of Elisabetta but it would appear from Gianfrancesco's instructions to him that he was also relying on Niccolò to do a great deal of the work,<sup>275/</sup> work which Niccolò was apparently most willing to do.<sup>276/</sup> His instructions to Catabene for 7 February are more explicit, though. He was asked to argue that the Malatesta would always be faithful adherents to the Papacy if the vicariates were restored to them.<sup>277/</sup> It is, in the final analysis, difficult to judge just how much influence these negotiations had upon Martin. The vicariates were returned to the three brothers on 1 July 1430, even if in doing so one of Martin's demands was the restoration of a considerable amount of land to the Papacy. This, however, meant a diminution of Malatesta influence, and the hostility between the Pesaro and Rimini branches of the family does not seem to have been settled.<sup>278/</sup> Although this matter is not particularly relevant to the Lombard Wars 'per se', it does provide us with an indication of Gianfrancesco's personal reputation, which his achievements in the war served to foster.<sup>279/</sup>

It could be argued that Gianfrancesco did not press Martin as hard as he might have over the question of the Malatesta inheritance; but there was a powerful reason for this. In the same instructions to Catabene (7 February) Gianfrancesco was involved in negotiations with the Papacy which affected him very much more closely and which he was definitely

unwilling to jeopardise by being over-insistent on other matters. This concerned the prospective marriage of his daughter Margherita to Leonello d'Este.

It is obvious that a man like Gianfrancesco, who was concerned about raising the prestige of his state and family, should spend a considerable amount of thought over the question of the marriage of his children. In the past the close connections with the house of Malatesta had been of some importance; and so it was not surprising that Gianfrancesco saw the great benefits which could accrue from an even closer liaison with the house of Este. Niccolò, by now an Italian 'elder statesman', had made Ferrara into an important state; it had been the city in which the peace negotiations in the wars were conducted, and Niccolò himself was acquiring the reputation of a skilled arbiter.

Niccolò, however, had been married three times, although Leonello was the eldest son, Gianfrancesco wanted to be absolutely sure that he would inherit the Marquisate of Ferrara and that Margherita would consequently become Marchesa. To this effect in February 1430 negotiations were already under way with Martin V, because Ferrara was a Papal Vicariate. A few months earlier, at the end of 1429, both Gianfrancesco and Niccolò had agreed that the Pope should be approached with a view to his granting a Bull which was to guarantee Leonello's succession to the Marquisate of Ferrara, Rovigo and Commachio.<sup>280/</sup> This concern was most certainly caused by Martin's policy of resuming his control of the Papal States. Francesco de Catabene was requested to add his voice to those of Niccolò's ambassadors, emphasising the continual loyalty of the House of Este to the Papacy and that Niccolò was always prepared to do his duties as far as paying the census was concerned.<sup>281,</sup>

Gianfrancesco was very concerned that this matter should be settled as quickly as possible, and this is borne out by a letter which he subsequently sent to Catabene on 10 March in which he was criticised for not pressing the matter strongly enough.<sup>282/</sup> In fact, there is evidence that would lead us to believe that Gianfrancesco was even more insistent over this issue than Niccolò himself was. Judging from a letter to Gianfrancesco by Niccolò's secretary Jacopo Zi-liolo on 25 January 1430 it had been Gianfrancesco who had re-drafted the sort of document that he wanted the Pope to grant.<sup>283/</sup> Gianfrancesco would have liked the Pope to have granted exclusive rights of succession to Leonello, but it was doubtful whether the Pope would accede to these terms. In the end it was agreed that Leonello should have precedence over any other of Niccolò's children,<sup>284/</sup> and on the basis of this an agreement over the marriage was reached on 4 January 1431. Margherita's dowry was fixed at 25,000 golden ducats together with possession of the castle of Melara on the Po, east of Ostiglia.<sup>285/</sup> All this would indicate just how careful Gianfrancesco was over the question of the marriage of his children and how mindful of his personal prestige he was in his anxiety that his daughter should only marry Niccolò's acknowledged successor in Ferrara. The same was true of his plan to marry Cecilia to Oddantonio da Montefeltro, a marriage which did not materialise owing to Cecilia's desire to enter a convent. There were, as yet, no real plans for the marriage of Gianfrancesco's eldest son Ludovico, although the name of a daughter of the Marquis of Cortona had been raised as early as 1428.<sup>286/</sup> However, Gianfrancesco was more careful than ever over the choice of a wife for Ludovico and was, for the time being, willing to bide his time until a prospective bride commensurate with his dignity should present herself. The fact that Ludovico was a very eligible young man is in itself proof of the prestige which Mantua enjoyed.

The peace of Ferrara proved only to be yet another breathing space because Filippo Maria regarded the terms as too humiliating to provide anything other than a temporary solution. In 1429 and 1430 he was seeking ways to violate this peace and this meant that Gianfrancesco could not afford to relax at all. Not only had the Visconti been menacing the Marquis of Monferrat, an ally of the league, but his ambassadors in Venice were pushing Milanese claims to those areas of the Cremonese which had been awarded to Venice in March 1429. This was a matter of great concern to Gianfrancesco and not only was he himself frequently in Venice to keep track of developments, but he was also being constantly kept informed by Jacopo Ziliolo from Ferrara.<sup>287/</sup>

In the previous January Filippo Maria himself, anxious to appear as innocent and reasonable as possible, had asked Venice for negotiations on this subject.<sup>288/</sup> In reality, however, this was just another attempt to gain time; the negotiations were never really to have any success. In fact, it became Milanese policy to split the league up - in particular to divide Florence and Venice. In fact, it did seem that relations between Florence and Venice were not very harmonious; in particular, the Venetians were not at all happy about Florence's commitment to the war against Milan.<sup>289/</sup> Alberghati had been trying his best to keep the peace which he had mediated, but by June he too was preparing to leave for Rome, a disillusioned man.<sup>290/</sup>

The war which took place in Tuscany between Filippo Maria and Florence over Lucca in 1430 was symptomatic of the deliberate lengths which Milan was prepared to go to. The war itself does not really concern us here 'per se'.<sup>291/</sup> but it did tend to place an undue strain on the



already fragile relationship between Florence and Venice. In fact, the Florentines were very surprised when the Venetians found excuses not to send the aid which they requested..<sup>292/</sup> The Venetians complained that they could not spare the men at the time and argued that intervention in Lucca did not fall within their league commitments.

The Florentines were particularly alarmed at the presence of Francesco Sforza in Tuscany and, to-wards the beginning of June they even offered to bribe him with 5,000 ducats if only he would leave Tuscany. At that time Sforza was acting merely as an instrument in Viscontean policy, but the Venetians were still anxious to get him into their service. In fact, on and off, attempts to do so continued right through 1430 and the Doge made a special point of trying to get Gianfrancesco involved in this. Judging by their subsequent correspondence with each other, there seems to have been a relationship of mutual respect between Gianfrancesco and Sforza, a relationship between two professional soldiers. This is why Foscari judged Gianfrancesco to be so useful in this respect. The first documentary evidence of this occurs in a letter of 19 October 1430.<sup>293/</sup> In effect the Venetians were only playing Filippo Maria at his own game; but they were not successful. They were still encouraging Gianfrancesco as late as 6 January 1431, about the time that Sforza returned to Lombardy, and Filippo Maria's service.<sup>294/</sup> They had already been consulting with Gianfrancesco over the fortification of the Mantuan borders around Guastalla in the previous month.

In reality, behind the scenes, Venice was once more preparing for war, but war on a much larger scale than ever before. In the late summer of 1430 Carmagnola was busy enrolling men, in particular the Lord

of Faenza, and on 17 August he was recalled to Venice from Brescia to discuss plans. Judging from the deliberations of the Senate, the war was going to be taken beyond the Bresciano and Cremonese into the Milanese itself,<sup>295/</sup> and Carmagnola was promised any city he conquered beyond the Adda with the exception of Milan itself. The Senate was most anxious at this stage to give Carmagnola every incentive to prosecute a vigorous war against Milan.

Despite the customary gestures of peace from Milan, an attempted raid on the castle of Orcinovi on 4 January 1431 was the pretext for the opening of hostilities. Carmagnola's own personal condotta was increased to 625 lances<sup>296/</sup> and, on 3 February, Francesco Barbarigo and Delfino Venier were sent with orders from the Senate about the overall tactics of the war.

In Sanuto's military list for this stage of the war, however, Gianfrancesco's name does not appear. In fact, from now until 1432 he was to have a very secondary role to play. At first it would seem somewhat curious that this should have been the case. After all, it could be argued that his record of success in the earlier stages of the war had been better than Carmagnola's. It would also seem to contradict the contention that the Senate was grooming him for eventual command. If the Senate was suspicious of Carmagnola's fidelity, moreover, why did it entrust him with such a crucial campaign and yet not even attempt to involve Gianfrancesco, whose loyalty had never been called into question? These are all very difficult questions to answer because the documents which have survived give no enlightenment. Nevertheless, it is important at least to propose a hypothesis based upon the evidence which is available because this period had a very important bearing on Gianfrancesco's relationship with Venice.

Platina tries to offer some reason for Gianfrancesco's relative inaction by suggesting that he refused Venetian requests because of ill-health and also by hinting that the Senate wanted to avoid any potential differences of opinion between the two men by placing Carmagnola in sole command.<sup>297/</sup> There may well be a certain amount of truth in both these assertions but, in the light of analysis made earlier in this chapter, it would appear that some of the central issues have been avoided. Can a more logical reason for the Senate's action be proposed?

In answering this two points are very important. Firstly the distinction between military commander and his deputy was important to the Venetians. Of course, both were expected to carry out the state's policy, but the degree of commitment was different. However effective Gianfrancesco's work may have been, there was no escaping from the fact that the ultimate responsibility, as far as failure was concerned, was Carmagnola's. This was the inevitable price which had to be paid for supreme command.

Secondly, the position between Gianfrancesco and Carmagnola in Venice's eyes was different in one important respect. Whereas the basis of Venice's relationship with Carmagnola was that of a state to a professional soldier of proven ability, their relationship with Gianfrancesco was that of a state to the ruler of another state in the first instance. We have already seen that this latter relationship had many special implications for both parties. Gianfrancesco wanted Venice's protection; he was not involved in any vast expansionist policy for Manuta. Initially, Venice wanted Gianfrancesco's adherence for the protection of the terraferma and consequently had to be very careful about the level of commitment required from him. This was inherent in the treaty of 1421, and it was clear that

he could not be pushed too far. In effect the motivating force of the relationship had been largely built upon a mutual identity of purpose - the Venice's policy was commensurate with Mantua's security. As we have seen, this situation operated when the war was concentrated in the Bresciano and Cremonese.

In 1431 this situation no longer existed because the war for Venice had changed into a struggle for empire with Milan and it would be unrealistic in the extreme to suggest that Mantua had any interests on the left bank of the Adda. Now Mantua was no longer the centre of operations. In February the Senate decided to send Carmagnola to live in Bergamo,<sup>298/</sup> and this move in itself is indicative of a change of military direction. A bridge was to be constructed over the Adda and ultimately an advance was to be made into the Valle San Martino after having secured the three important centres of Treviglio, Caravaggio and Soncino. As before these land campaigns were to be supplemented by the Venetian river fleet under the command of Niccolò Trevisan.

Gianfrancesco was not involved personally in these campaigns because they did not directly coincide with Mantua's interests. This is very well illustrated by a letter which Gianfrancesco wrote to the Doge on 20 January 1431 from Marmirolo. Judging from its contents Carmagnola had sent a letter to Gianfrancesco asking him to send men to participate in his campaign, a copy of which, in his usual punctilious manner, he despatched to Venice. Normally as second in command he would be expected to comply with the wishes of his superior, but on this occasion Gianfrancesco felt that he needed to justify himself in the eyes of Venice. He gave two reasons for acting otherwise; firstly, because Carmagnola's request came too late and his men were spread out over the Mantovano in such a way that an immediate muster could not be organised,<sup>299/</sup> and secondly,

because the presence of Sforza near his territories required their remaining where they were.<sup>300/</sup> Moreover, because of this, he asked Venice to send him reinforcements to protect the area which was most immediately threatened, Remedello.<sup>301/</sup>

As regards Carmagnola's loyalty to Venice, the Provveditori would keep a very close watch upon his every move. In fact, the Senate seemed perfectly happy that Carmagnola's actions could be adequately supervised, and, judging from the records of the Senate, he still had a number of supporters who were anxious to encourage him as much as possible.<sup>302/</sup>

Gianfrancesco's role at this time was concerned very much with the protection of his territories and this was a role which, for the time being, the Venetian Senate were content for him to play.<sup>303/</sup> In its correspondence with him for 1430-1 there are no overt exhortations for him to join Carmagnola. In fact, his only direct contribution to the war effort was to see that the Po fleet was adequately provisioned and that the security of the boats was to be guaranteed during their passage through his territory.<sup>304/</sup> He was also asked to make fairly regular consignments of grain to the troops and to make sure that it was well guarded from enemy attack.<sup>305/</sup> Apart from these small, but nevertheless important, activities, much of Gianfrancesco's time was spent in negotiating periodic truces with Guastalla and Mirandola. This not only concerned the security of his own territory, but were very important for the safety of river communications.<sup>306/</sup>

The negotiations with Guido Torello were in progress once more in October 1430 and the Venetians were encouraging them. They urged Gianfrancesco to try at least to secure the neutrality of Guastalla and

wanted him to press Torello not to build any new fortifications in his territories.<sup>307/</sup> The discussions resulted in the agreement of 9 December in which Torello acceded to all Gianfrancesco's requests.<sup>308/</sup> The truce was to run for one year and three months of 'contrabando'. The Po around Guastalla would become neutral territory and all lands which Gianfrancesco possessed "de zà da Po" were to be safeguarded. In the document of ratification dated 22 December Torello also promised that he would comply with the Venetian request concerning the fortifications of Guastalla.<sup>309/</sup> This truce was renewed in the following December on virtually the same terms<sup>310/</sup> which also later included the protection of lands which Feltrino and Giacomo Gonzaga possessed in Nivolari and Roli.<sup>311/</sup> Guido Torello was never an easy or trustworthy man to deal with, and, judging from the conditions he demanded for the truces, he was a shrewd bargainer. Although it never proved possible during this period to win him over from Filippo Maria, the vulnerability of his lands to the league was a factor which Gianfrancesco could capitalise upon at least to ensure that Guastalla could not be used as a base for incursions into his own territories.

The truce with Mirandula which was concluded on 1 May 1431 was less important than that with Torello, but it was still necessary to protect Gianfrancesco's communications with Ferrara. Once again Badoer was keeping his masters as fully informed of developments as possible and was relaying copies of the relevant documents to them.<sup>312/</sup> The final agreement was to last for four months and one month of 'contrabando'. The negotiations were conducted at fairly frequent intervals during the next phase of the war.<sup>313/</sup> In a letter which Gianfrancesco wrote to Venice on 22 January 1431 we learn that he was very concerned about convincing

the Doge of the necessity of this for the protection of his territories.<sup>314/</sup> While he was sounding out the possibilities of a truce with Mirandola on behalf of Venice it would also appear that Filippo Maria was lending his encouragement for this to the Mirandola brothers, and this was certainly part of his policy to stave off hostilities for as long as possible. However, doubtful Visconti's motives may have been, at least Gianfrancesco could derive some benefit from it for the time being.

For the purposes of this chapter it is not necessary to examine the events of 1431 in any detail. As far as Gianfrancesco was concerned it was probably very fortunate that he did play a secondary role, if only because of the fact that he would thereby not be associated with Carmagnola's lack of success.

The aim of crossing the Adda was not achieved; it was not even possible for Carmagnola to consolidate his position between the Oglio and Adda. In March he failed to take Soncino, primarily because the ducal forces had organised themselves more efficiently. On the contrary, now it was Carmagnola who was constrained at the end of the month retreat back across the Oglio, much to the intense joy of Filippo Maria.<sup>315/</sup>

Although the Senate were still encouraging Carmagnola to persevere, this must have been very disappointing for them. On 13 April Fantino Michiel was sent to Carmagnola to consult over future plans and it is certain that an extensive river campaign formed part of their discussions. Michiel was urging Carmagnola to move as quickly as possible because there was information that the ducal army was about to be reinforced by Piccinino's troops who were on their way from Tuscany.<sup>316/</sup>

Unfortunately the plans for coordinated river/land campaigns were not successful. On 6 June another attempt to take Soncino was foiled by Sforza, a battle in which the Venetians lost some 500 cavalry.

Although these operations did not directly concern Gianfrancesco, the consequences of defeat did make him feel increasingly uneasy. Any further Milanese advance would naturally tend to endanger his frontiers once more; and as 1431 wore on his anxieties increased. The Venetians could also see what might happen and should the war once more be centred around the Mantuan borders it became a matter of prime importance to keep Gianfrancesco as highly motivated as ever. This may well be the reasoning behind the grants of land to him which were made at this time. On 7 June 1431, in recognition of his faithful service to the Venetian Republic, Gianfrancesco was formally invested with lands in the Cremonese and Bresciano. In the Bresciano he was granted Lonato, Solferino, Castelfreddo, Redonesco, Canedole and Ostiano; in the Cremonese he acquired Bozzolo, Riparolo de Foro, Viadana, Isola Dovaresse, Montesauri, Asola with all its appurtenances and Sabbioneta.<sup>317/</sup> In other words, the Gonzaga family were invested with all the gains they had made in the wars against the Visconti in perpetuity. Now Gianfrancesco had an even greater interest in the protection of this strategically crucial area. There always seemed to be an ulterior motive behind such moves by the Venetian Senate.

As it turned out, this bequest came at the right psychological moment because on 21 June the Venetian fleet suffered a crushing defeat near Pizzighettone against a very strong Milanese force commanded by Pasino Eustachio, amply supported on land by Sforza and Piccinino. In many ways this could be argued to be the most momentous engagement of this phase of the war. Its strategic consequences were much more significant than Macclodio.



Apart from four or five ships, the whole of the Venetian fleet was destroyed and the number of casualties was extremely high. It has been estimated that 800 died and 400 were wounded.<sup>318/</sup>

What tended to make this more serious was that Carmagnola did not move to help the beleaguered Venetian fleet when his forces were comparatively near. The news of the defeat produced a considerable reaction in Venice, but, curiously enough, Carmagnola was not held to be responsible.<sup>319/</sup> Trevisan, the fleet commander, however, was sentenced to imprisonment. Although Carmagnola's military career was once again reprieved, and although for the time being Venetian policy of pushing across the Adda had to be modified, this ultimate objective was still held to be a realistic possibility by the Senate.

Very soon, however, Carmagnola's caution brought him into conflict with the Senate. As the campaigning season wore to its close he had made some headway in consolidating Venetian power on the right bank of the Adda, but it appeared to be vague and piecemeal as far as the Senate was concerned, and the dispute he had with the Senate over the issue of going into winter quarters again as early as August tended to make matters doubly worse.<sup>320/</sup> Possevino even suggests that Gianfrancesco was getting critical over Carmagnola's indecisiveness.<sup>321/</sup> These criticisms gained new urgency from the fact that Sigismund's arrival in Italy was imminent,<sup>322/</sup> and the Senate was frightened that they would have to protect Friuli. In fact, Carmagnola was active there in November 1431.

The truth of the matter was that Carmagnola became increasingly trapped by Venice's political ambitions. Now that Venice had committed itself to a policy of expansion there could be no turning back without a

loss of face and the inevitable reaction of a much greater threat to the Veneto and consequently the Mantovano. Although there is no direct evidence that the Senate were considering punishing Carmagnola, it was debating his actions more and more actively after October 1431.<sup>323/</sup>

It is not at all clear precisely when the Senate decided to take action against Carmagnola. However, by the beginning of 1432 the situation was very bleak indeed. Far from pursuing a glorious campaign to the very walls of Milan the Venetians were sorely pressed financially<sup>324/</sup> and, moreover, the successes of Piccinino in the Cremonese threatened to obliterate all the work which had been achieved in the previous year. Once again Gianfrancesco was directly threatened; one by one such fortresses as Toricella, Bordolano and Casalmaggiore fell to Piccinino and ducal forces were once again making raids into the area around Asola, where a great deal of damage was being inflicted. As early as January Gianfrancesco was relaying information back to Venice via Badoer; in fact he had been continually warning Venice against the dangers of this renewed Milanese advance. In a letter of 12 January from Venice to Gianfrancesco the Senate tried to pacify his growing fears and his alarm that it was not offering him sufficient protection. The letter goes on to assure Gianfrancesco of the 'optima dispositione' of the Senate towards him and reassured him that it had his interests continually at heart.<sup>325/</sup> It even invited him to Venice to discuss these matters.

There is much to indicate that in January Gianfrancesco was beginning to feel that the Venetians were not considering his interests, and Venice's elaborate assurances would suggest that they, perhaps, were afraid of losing his friendship. On 5 January Orlando Pallavicino of Busseto had

gone over to Filippo Maria<sup>326/</sup> and this action might have made them more alive to the possibilities inherent in neglecting Gianfrancesco's interests and requests for help. In fact, Battistella has grossly underestimated the importance of Gianfrancesco's feelings.<sup>327/</sup> With Piccinino in the curcial area Mantua was once more an important element in Venetian strategy and Battistella did not appreciate how dangerous it would be if the Mantovano fell into enemy hands. Gianfrancesco's close alliance with Venice was, at its roots, based upon protection, and if this is no longer operated, there could be no guarantee that Gianfrancesco would not listen to any overtures Filippo Maria might make. This was only a fear, because Gianfrancesco had always been loyal to Venice; but it was nevertheless fear which could not be ignored.

In short, it could be argued that Carmagnola's inaction created a situation which could very well have jeopardised Venice's relationship with its most valuable and faithful supporter. This would have been a very powerful reason for dispensing with Carmagnola. There has never really been any convincing explanation offered for the Senate's sudden decision in April to arrest Carmagnola for treason after it had shown itself so surprisingly indulgent over what it had regarded as his previous shortcomings. Commentators have neglected to consider Gianfrancesco's role in this matter. At the beginning of 1432, with failure staring them in the face, Mantua's friendship must have appeared more valuable than ever. The political unacceptability of Carmagnola's slow and piecemeal strategy might well be rectified and Venice's terraferma might be protected much more surely if the Lord of Mantua was also Commander of the Venetian army especially since he had proved himself so able and energetic in the first stages of the war. Such a display of confidence would certainly make the relationship with Venice more binding than ever before.

This would account, in part, for the role which Gianfrancesco played in the events which immediately preceeded the arrest and trial of Carmagnola. Before examining these events, however, one important proviso must be made. It must be emphasised that although Gianfrancesco had been critical both of Carmagnola and Venice for their slowness of action as far as his interests were concerned, there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that he had any direct complicity in the Senate's plans. On the contrary, Gianfrancesco's initial reactions were of shock and surprise.

It is arguable that, in a very real sense, Gianfrancesco was being used by Venice in order to lure Carmagnola into the net which had been prepared to him. According to Carmagnola's biographer, the decision to bring him to Venice was taken on 29 March, but forceful means were not to be used.<sup>328/</sup> It was decided that Giovanni de Imperiis should be sent to Brescia with letters from the Senate requesting Carmagnola's attendance at Venice for talks over military policy. In order to make this seem more genuine it was emphasized that Gianfrancesco would also be present and letters were also sent to Gianfrancesco to this effect. Gianfrancesco would have seen nothing unusual in this because he had frequently been summoned to Venice in the past. Arrangements had, in fact, been made for Carmagnola to be arrested and held in Brescia if he failed to comply with the Senate's request. At the same time letters were sent to such condottieri as Luigi dal Verme and Luigi di San Severino who were in Venice's service to continue the war against Milan as energetically as possible. Marco Dandolo was to preside in Brescia during Carmagnola's absence.

Carmagnola, obedient to the Senate's request, left Brescia on 6 April and arrived in Venice on the following day. According to the

chroniclers he was immediately escorted to the Ducal palace where he discovered that the Doge was unable to speak with him that night. When he made to leave the palace he was instead escorted to the prisons.<sup>329/</sup> On that very same day Gianfrancesco sent a letter to Paola which consisted of the following shocked sentence: "Ista hore, primam horam noctis, Serenissimum Ducale Dom. detinuit Comitem Carmagnolam."<sup>330/</sup>

While Gianfrancesco's presence in Venice was part of the plan to take Carmagnola unawares, this is not the complete story. If the chroniclers are correct Carmagnola hardly had time to see anyone before he was arrested. If this was the only reason for Gianfrancesco's presence there was no real necessity for it. There were two other reasons for making sure of Gianfrancesco's attendance. In the eyes of the Senate the arrest of Carmagnola was palpable proof of their desire to punish a man who had not carried out their policy and had consequently endangered Gianfrancesco's position; in other words, it was designed to show just how solicitous they were for Gianfrancesco's safety. Perhaps more important, or possibly as a consequence of this, they wished to show immediately what faith they had in Gianfrancesco by offering him the supreme command. On 10 April he wrote once more to his wife informing her of his unanimous election as Captain General of the Venetian army and that, in the company of Marco Dandolo and Giorgio Cornaro as provveditori, he was going immediately to Brescia to take over where Carmagnola had left off<sup>331/</sup> Ludovico, his eldest son, was to join him with fifty lances.

The cool and dispassionate way in which Carmagnola was tortured, tried and executed on 23 April 1432 must have had a profound effect upon Gianfrancesco. The lesson of what could befall those who were weighed in

the balance and were found wanting was one which he never forgot - it most certainly lay heavily upon his mind in 1438.

There can be no doubt that all this was premeditated, and that in a sense Gianfrancesco had been presented with as much of a 'fait accompli' as Carmagnola. He had been manoeuvred into a position in which ultimately he had no choice other than to accept the offer because it would be dangerous to refuse.

On the day following Carmagnola's execution the Doge wrote two letters to Gianfrancesco, who by this time had just reached Brescia.<sup>332/</sup> Both letters refer to the continuing negotiations with Sigismund over the Marquisate. Gianfrancesco's secretary Giovanni Tomei Donesmondi had already been negotiating with one of the Imperial secretaries but the Venetians now informed Gianfrancesco that they intended to press much harder for a successful conclusion. Through Donesmondi they relayed to Sigismund that his friendship with Venice revolved very much around the granting of the Imperial title and they warned Sigismund that if he should ever withhold any privileges which he conferred upon Gianfrancesco Venice would never reach any agreement with him until those privileges had been restored.<sup>333/</sup>

In addition to this subtle blackmail, the letters also show how pleased they were with Gianfrancesco's presence in Brescia and how confident they were that now the outcome of operations would be successful. Finally they approved the arrangements which Gianfrancesco had made for the security of his own territories at this time.<sup>334/</sup>

The timing of these letters could not have been better from a psychological point of view and they completely bear out the hypothesis

regarding Venice's motives which was postulated above. Gianfrancesco, unwittingly, had not only played an important part in Carmagnola's downfall, but he was also gently but inevitably pushed into a position where he was forced to take upon himself the mantle of his fallen colleague and hero.

With the downfall of Carmagnola we have come to the end of the first phase of the Lombard Wars. It can be seen that the part which Gianfrancesco Gonzaga played in it was indispensable. Not only was his state of crucial strategic importance to Venice, but the part which he had played in the wars as soldier, diplomat and organiser showed him to be a man with flair and determination. In his relations with Venice we have seen in operation a classic example of the buffer state mentality which was proposed at the beginning of this study and, moreover, in comparing his career with that of Carmagnola it had been possible to observe Venice's attitude to military relationships in close juxtaposition with state policy at a fascinating period of transition from defence to aggression. In viewing the war from this perspective it has been possible to throw into even greater relief the motives which dictated the conduct of both parties in this dialogue between opportunism on Venice's part, and sheer necessity on that of Gianfrancesco.

By April 1432 Venice was convinced that Gianfrancesco was the man to lead their army across the Adda. However, Gianfrancesco was not so sure of this. An opportunist would not have hesitated at the alluring prospect of fame and power, but Gianfrancesco had his own state to think about and the fate of Carmagnola was already beginning to cast its long shadow over his life. There was all the difference in the world between second-in-command and

the Captain General of the Venetian army and, as we shall see in the next chapter, Gianfrancesco was to prove a very reluctant commander. He was indeed poised on the brink of a career which any aspiring soldier would have envied; but because he was such an astute man and because he had been involved intimately in the fate of Carmagnola, Gianfrancesco realised that the exigencies of Mantua's security dictated that he really had no choice in the matter. He already appreciated that supreme command had an increasingly sour taste about it.



## Chapter 3.

GIANFRANCESCO GONZAGA AND THE FIRST PHASE OFTHE LOMBARD WARS (1420-1432)Notes

1. L.A. Muratori, Annali d'Italia (Florence 1827), Vol. 22, p.92.
2. Arch. Gon. B.1595 (Verona), 19 April 1422; "....si...habetis autem in futurum sentietis nova aliqua digna relitur dignemini earundem facere nos participes..."
3. Among the most recent contributions are H. Baron, Humanistic and Political Literature in Florence and Venice at the beginning of the Quattrocento (Cambridge, Mass. 1953), and N. Rubinstein, "Italian Reactions to Terraferma Expansion in the 15th Century", Renaissance Venice, ed. J. Hale, (LONDON 1973).
4. Baron evaluated the situation as follows: "The motives which turned Venice in the first two decades of the quattrocento against practical co-operation with Florence was not any anti-Florentine bias in favour of Viscontean Milan, but an isolationist attitude which refused to acknowledge the existence of a mutual interdependence among the members of the rising Italian states... Not until the start of Milanese expansion in the time of Filippo Maria was the fallacy of these apparently sound and businesslike calculations demonstrated. The historic struggle between two schools of Venetian statesmanship did not take place as early as January 1421 but during the second half of 1422 when Italy began to see the meaning of the renewed pressure from the Visconti." Pol. and Hum. Lit. cit. p.214. However, this is not strictly true judging from the Venetian treaty with Mantua of 1421.
5. Arch. Gon. B.43 (treaties), fol.77., 14 March 1421. See also S.S. reg.8 fol. 13t .. Donato's report to the Senate and the final drawing up of terms.
6. *ibid.* ".....et filialem devocionem idem Mag, dnus Mantue suique progenitores continue habuerunt et habeant ad prefatum .....dominum Venetiarum...."
7. *ibid.* ".....liberam transitum ac victualia omnibus gentibus et amicis dicti illustris ducalis dni..." on 26 September Mocenigo requested free access of ammunition to Mantua: "...Conduci faciate de territoria terre nostre Montissilias ad suam terram Mantue lapides 1500 a bombardis .....libere et sine solutione alcuius dotu vel gabelle" [Arch. Go. B1419, fol. 2.].
8. *ibid.*; Venice "Non gravabit" Gianfrancesco for wars against Verona and the Veronese, Casalmaggiore, Brescello, Toricelle and the surrounding area. This was a very politic move in the circumstances.
9. *ibid.*; "....quocienscumque dnus. Mantua haberet guerram teneatur expendere 2000 ducat. omni mense in gentibus armorum, equestribus ul. pedestribus prout melius videbitur..."

10. *ibid.*; "...Residuum autem pro conservationem status ipsius teneatur supplere prefatum ducale dominum..." Gianfrancesco was also promised reinforcements should he require them - up to 2,000 infantry and cannon.
11. Filippo Maria was a very retiring and superstitious person. There is an interesting appreciation of his character in A. Billia "*Rerum Mediolanensium Historia*", R.I.S. Vol. XIX col. 60 ff. See also Treccani, (Mi), pp.198-9.
12. There are a number of general accounts of Filippo Maria's rule, but one of the most recent is in Treccani, (Mi.) ch.V. Unfortunately there had not yet been written a detailed appraisal of Filippo Maria's rule. There is quite a useful life in R.I.S. Vol.XX, Pier Candido Decembrio's, "*Vita Filippi Mariae*", ed. Fossati.
13. There is an excellent study of Carmagnola by A. Battistella II Conte Carmagnola; one of the best examples of its kind. Frequent reference will be made to this work later on in the chapter. See also E. Ricotti, Storia delle Compagnie di Ventura (Turin 1893), Vol.II,Ch.1.
14. See Treccani, (Mi), p.180-1.
15. It was comprised principally of Milan, Pavia, Novara, Como, Lodi, Crema, Lecco, Alessandria, Tortona and Bobbio.
16. There is a very interesting study of Filippo Maria's expansionist policies by C. Romano, "*Contributo alla storia della ricostituzione del ducato Milanese sotto Filippo Maria Visconti*", A.S.L., Ser 3, xiii, 1897, pp. 67-146.
17. According to Sanuto, col. 912, Pietro Loredan was sent to Filippo Maria to remind him that by so doing he had broken a truce which had been set up with the mediation of Venice and was consequently liable to a penalty of 30,000 ducats. Filippo Maria, anxious not to jeopardise his good relations with Venice, protested that the truce had not been broken and that he was merely acquiring what had originally been his. See also Treccani, (Mi), p.182. Venice did not press the point because, for the time being, there seemed to be no real need to jeopardise good relations with Milan unduly.
18. See Deutsches Reichstagsakten, op. cit., Vol. VIII, no. 239.
19. Martin issued an adjudication from Mantua on 21 February 1419 in which Pandolfo, in return for giving Filippo Maria a lump sum of 1,500 florins, would keep Brescia and Bergamo during his lifetime, but on his death the two cities would revert to Milan. This adjudication did not have the desired effect because Pandolfo was chronically short of money and in the circumstances continual payments to Filippo Maria would have been impossible and such a situation only made Filippo Maria more anxious than ever to occupy the cities. See C. Romano, op. cit., p.393. Also Z. Volta, "*Papa Martino a Milano*", A.S.L., Ser.2, iv, 1886.
20. Bergamo fell on 24 July 1419 and Oldrado de Lampugnano took possession of Cremona on 19 February 1420. Not unnaturally there was tremendous jubilation in Milan.

21. See A. Zanelli "Brescia sotto la signoria di Filippo Maria Visconti", R.S.I., 9, iii, 1892. See also Platina, op. cit., p. 303. Carmagnola's activities around Montechiari were very disturbing for Gianfrancesco.
22. See F. Gabotto, "Contributo alla storia delle relazioni tra Amedeo VIII e Filippo Maria Visconti," Boll. Soc. Pavese di Storia Patria, 1903.
23. G. Stella, "Annales Genuenses", R.I.S., Vol. VII, col. 1283; Billia, op. cit., col. 59 and Battistella, op. cit., pp.50-54.
24. Filippo Maria declared his intention of renouncing his father's possessions beyond the Adige in favour of Venice. This virtually amounted to an assurance that there would be no further expansion eastwards. See Treccani (Mi), pp.202 ff.
25. See Treccani, op.(Mi) cit., pp.202-3; also "Annales Forolivienses", R.I.S. Vol. XXII, col. 86 and Italo Raulich, "La Prima Guerra fra i Veneti e Filippo Maria Visconti", R.S.I., 5 iii 1888, pp. 441-5 (for an assessment of the effect of Romagnol activities on Florence).
26. Not only was the struggle a political one but it was also elevated onto an ideological level by the Florentines as a clash between republicanism and tyranny. For an excellent study of this see Baron Crisis of the early Italian Renaissance pp. 28ff. See also ch. 12 of Political and Humanistic Literature in Florence and Venice cit., by the same author for a specific discussion of the discourses of Tommaso Mocenigo.
27. Even here we see an ambiguous attitude. There was a strong pro-Milanese contingent at the Curia. Rinaldo degli Albizzi reported on 12 Oct. 1421 re. Martin: "desidera che la vostra signoria s'intenda appeno co' Viniziani; che per questa via spererebbe ogni pericolo si cessasse." Ed. C. Guasti, Commissioni di Rinaldo degli Albizzi per il comune di Firenze dal 1399 al 1433. 3 vols. (Documenti di Storia Italiana, Florence 1867-73). Vol 1. pp.327ff.
28. Treccani, (Mi)., p.197.
29. The Venetians were also concerned about the security of these areas because they could provide Filippo Maria with bases from which Verona and Vicenza could be threatened. See Platina, op. cit., p.303: "Tulere id aegre Veneti quod habita Pischeria, occupari facile ab eadem Verona ac Vincentia posset."
30. "...volendum facere impresam contra civitatem Mantue..." S.S. reg. 8, fol. 27t, 17 Aug. 1421. This was apparently relayed by ambassadors who were on their way to Milan sent by Pandolfo Malatesta and Este.
31. S.S. reg. 8, fol. 37t, 6 Nov. 1421.
32. *ibid.* reg. 8, fol. 53t, 17 May 1422: "....hortando ob id Mag. m. suam ipse providere dictam locam fulcire se gentibus et rebus necessarias etc.."
33. *ibid.* reg. 8, fol. 37t: "...et tenemus firmiter quod mag. sua dictam requisitionem non faciet nisi in casu ardue necessitas.."

34. *ibid.* reg. 8, fol. 43, 28 Feb 1422: "...Sm. quia consideratis est penitus necessaria terrarum et locorum suorum, pro bona conservatione sui status.."
35. *ibid.* reg. 8, fol. 45t. 19 March 1422.
36. *ibid.*: "deliberavimus fortificare nos aliquibus gentibus equestribus et pedestribus ultra illas quas habemus." See also fol. 46. The details of these additions were published on 19 May 1422 (S.S. reg. 8, fol. 55t. It involved an additional 99 lances and a firma of 6 months with another 6 'di rispetto'.
37. S.S. reg. 8, fol. 47, 1 April 1422. The shortlist included Braccio da Montone and Francesco Sforza, both of whom were not available. It was decided in the end to ask Pandolfo Malatesta (fol. 47 et t.)
38. *ibid.* reg. 8, fol. 55t, 17 May 1422. This was an almost unanimous decision by the Senate; there was only one vote against it.
39. *ibid.* reg. 8, fol. 56t & 57, 16 May 1422.
40. *ibid.* reg. 8, fol. 99, 28 March 1423. Ambrogio Badoer was also given strict instructions as far as the gathering of information was concerned.
41. Sanuto gives 15 April. For details of the election see cols. 966-968. The date of the election is important in relation to the activities of Filippo Maria.
42. For the circumstances of this see A. Fino, *Storia di Crema* (Crema 1711), Vol. 1 and Treccani, (Mi) p.189.
43. Sanuto, col. 968.
44. Italo Raulich, *op. cit.*, p.443. Also S.S. reg. 8, fol. 56. This was part of an almost continual effort by the Florentines during these years. In 1423 Florence offered to mediate between Venice and Sigismund in order to obviate the need for an alliance with Milan (Raulich p. 433 note 2). See also O. Schiff, Kaiser Sigismunds Italienische Politik (Frankfurt 1910) pp. 82ff. Unfortunately, this did not work. On 31 March 1423 Rinaldo degli Albizzi reported back to the 'Dieci di Balia'. Venice's reply was: "...ma solo avendo più volte cerco la pace collo 'mperadore, e rinucisi di lui, disse feceno lega col Duca di Milano, per la quale non possono trattare alcuno accordo, senza lui." Commissioni, Vol. 1, comm XXXVI, p.384. See also S.S. reg. 8, fol. 61t. 23 June 1422. In this month there were fairly active approaches from the Florentines. It is significant to note that although the Senate replied to Gianfrancesco that it was not yet prepared to sign any agreement, it thought that it was useful in principle. A second approach to Venice via Gianfrancesco in September 1423 was likewise rejected (S.S. reg. 8 fol. 126t. 26 Sept. 1423).
45. ".....necessario iudicant pro salute nostra, non solum ad defensione esse permanendum, nam in processu non longo temporis nostra destruxio sequeretur, que vitanda est. Et propterea Domini hortentur Decem balie ad procedendum viriliter et exequendum sibi commissa; offensione Ducis Mediolani procurando." Commissioni, Vol. 2, comm XLI, p.3.

46. In May 1423 Filippo Maria sent Federico Castiglione to Florence specifically in order to explain his reasons for occupying Forlì. The rather fatuous reasons for occupying it which were given at the time were that he wanted to secure the passage through the Romagna in order to help the Pope against Braccio da Montone. See Treccani, (Mi)., p. 206. Also Commissioni, Vol. 1, pp. 439ff. Filippo Maria's dealings with Condulmer over the question of Bologna in October 1423 show the nature of his feelings towards Florence.
47. See C. Lupi, "Delle relazioni tra la repubblica di Firenze e i conti e i duchi di Savoia", Giornale Storico degli Archivi Toscani Vol. VII (1863) and Gabotto, op. cit. Also Raulich, op. cit., p.443.
48. See Treccani, (Mi)., p. 212.
49. Pandolfo managed to escape but Carlo was taken prisoner and was taken back to Milan where he was apparently well-treated in view of his past service to the Visconti. Carlo was later to fight for Filippo Maria in the Lombard Wars.
50. Sanuto writes: "In questo tempo venne a Venezia il Marchese di Mantova a raccomandarsi alla Signoria, imperroché il Duca di Milano molto lo minacciava e si preparava a fargli danno. E per la Signoria gli fu risposto che non dubitasse, perché chi battesse il figliuolo batterebbe il padre e la madre. Onde il detto Signore si partì molto contento." (col. 976) See also Battistella, op. cit., p.99: "...nei suo segreto bramava riacquistare quelle terre che ...il Signor di Mantova aveva ottenuto dopo la morte di Giangaleazzo diventavano sempre più manifeste e pericolose."
51. See Platina, p.304. Gianfrancesco had been anxious for this to continue at least since 1422: ".....quare, Gonziaco admonito, ne mandata faceret, oratores ad Philippum mittunt (qui ethominem e Sententia dimoverunt et pacem in annos decem retulere...." This did result in Paolo Correr being sent to Milan.
52. Sanuto, col. 977: "Riferì la sua ambasciata, come avea fatta con quel Duca, e avea ottenuto il tutto, cioè, ch'egli non facesse guerra al Signore di Mantova, nè a quello di Ferrara, nè al Signor Pandolfo Malatesta; e così il Duca fu contento, dicendo ch'ogni preghiera della Signoria gli era commandamento".
53. Battistella, op. cit., p.100ff., Sanuto, col. 978, Platina, p.310.
54. See Raulich, op. cit., pp.451-2; Billia, op. cit., col. 83 and especially Sanuto, col. 978: "A 23 del detto mese giunse in questa terra il Conte Francesco Carmagnola travestito con 20 famigli. Si dice essere partito dal Duca di Milano in discordia, e pare ch'abbia molti danari con lui. E subito fu colla Signoria, e avvisalla di molte cose segrete." See also S.S. reg. 8, fol. 51 which mentions 80 followers. See also Cronaca Savina in the Biblioteca Marciana cod. 135 cl. VII col. 259ff., And Osio, op. cit., Vol 11, p. 109: "....per personas mihi idoneas relatum est Carmagnolem ore proprio exposuisse non semel sed pluries in Venetorum consilio, ac se obtulisse, quod in omni casu discordie et guerre assumando per eadem Venetos simul cum Florentinis contra vestre illustrissime dominationis statum." See also Battistella pp.100-101. See also Commissioni di Rinaldo degli Albizzi Vol. 1, comm. XLVII. It is doubtful that he addressed the Senate.

55. One of the main reasons for this was the prospect of his being crowned Emperor. See Osio, Vol. II, p.320 dox. CLII (July 31, 1427).
56. See Battistella, p. 105: "...infatti il governo veneto era troppo circospetto da lasciarsi smuovere dalle parole d'un forestiero quando ci fosse di mezzo la salute dell stato." This is confirmed by S.S. reg. 9, fols. 8 & 9.
57. Even though he was implicated in a plot to assassinate Carmagnola in the late summer of 1425 through the services of Gerardo di Ruberia. See Battistella op. cit., pp.110-111ff.
58. For the complete text see Raulich, pp. 464-8. Also Sanuto, col. 978: "...di condurlo con 300 lancie, e per la sua provisione della sua persona dargli all'anno ducati 6,000, dovendo egli tenere in casa sua cavalli 100 a sue spese, e stia nel Friuli o in Trivigliana o deve piacerà alla Signoria." See also Battistella, pp.102-4.
59. Osio, Vol. II, p.310, doc. CXCI.
60. Arch. Gon. B 1419, fols. 18 and 25. The Venetians were frightened "ob quod posset accidere naves que pro eo veneretur velle redire vacuas."
61. Romanin, op, cit., Vol. IV, pp.81-2.
62. cf. Platina, p. 310; "viro bellica laude insigna."
63. Platina, p. 307.
64. Volta op. cit. p.103.
65. Although Platina's history of the Gonzaga is heavily biased in their favour, he did use documentary material fairly extensively. For instance, on page 311 he confirms that a build-up of Venetian power in the Mantovano and Veronese had been in progress for some time: "...Convenerant jam omnes copiae in Veronensem ac Mantuanam agrum."
66. Platina, pp.308-3.0. Platina also ascribes similar statements to Niccolò d'Este. for example on p.306:".....Moti his precibus atque admonitionibus Veneti maxime vero, quod in etiam sententiam ne Gonziacum et Estensem Principes videbant, et operam in bello suam renovarunt...."
67. S.S. reg. 9, fol.40.
68. See J.C. Lünig Codex Italiae Diplomaticus op. cit., Vol. II, sect. VI, no. XXI, cols. 1979-1986. See also Romanin, op. cit., p.82 and Raulich, p.457.
69. S.S. reg. 9, fols. 55-58t. 3 Dec. 1425: "...Illam attente hortamur ut celeriter ad presentiam nostram veniatis ut nobiscum habito colloquio, possumus providere ad ea que fuerunt necessaria pro securitate status vri."
70. For details see Raulich, p.467.
71. Raulich, p.458.
72. e.g. see Raulich, pp. 661ff.

73. Arch. Gon. B.1419, fol. 10 15 Jan. 1425.
74. Arch. Gon. B.1228 (Ferrara) 23 Feb, Fols. 4 & 5. This is a copy of the despatch sent by Michiel and Contarini to Foscari. In connection with this document see also Arch. Gon. B.1419, fols. 21-3.
75. *ibid.* e.g. Castiglione: ".....primo etiam antequam venietur ad aliam praticam declarantur et nominantur partes, colligati, adherentes et reccomendati primo ad principium huius tractus nominentur in dicta pace et gaudeant beneficio pacis." The Venetians, on the other hand find it impossible to accede to this: ".... nec est conveniens q. primo nominantur colligati et reccomendati....q. talis nominacio semper reservatur in fine quando partes de reliquis capitulis sunt concordēs." See also Raulich, pp. 449-452.
76. Arch. Gon. B. 1228, fols.22-3. "....est Paratus ponere vitam, statum et quicquid habere ad mandata et unicum verbum celsitudinis vre." They suggested that 800 of the best Florentine cavalry should be selected for the job in hand. Niccolò did make an attempt to detach Angelo della Pergola from the Milanese alliance (Battistella, op. cit., p.120).
77. Arch. Gob. B. 1419, fol. 3: "....Gentes nostri celeriter ad loca nostra se conferrent." A secret message was also included in this letter which has not, unfortunately, survived.
78. *ibid.* "....quia scimus dictum Bolgnini esse amicum carum Angeli a Pergola."
79. Sanuto, col. 991. In the letter quoted in 77 & 78 the Venetians suggest that Bolognini should be persuaded to bring 40 lances.
80. Arch. Gon. B. 1419, fol. 13, 16 Jan.: "..Nam infiniti erant qui a conductoribus nostris cassari expecabant....Placuit multum nobis audire dispositionem vre. Mag.e. circum id." The Venetians were very guarded about the advisability of taking too many deserters from Viscontean service. There was an incident regarding this over two constables who had deserted on 1 February 1425(6). Arch. Gon. B.1419, fol. 15.
81. *eg.* Arch. Gon. B.1419, fol.4, 12 Jan.
82. *eg.* Arch. Gon. B.1419, fol.9, 13 Jan. in a letter to the Venetian "conductores equestribus" Petro Gian Paolo, count of Manuppelo, Ludovice Cane and Abbati de Petramola; they were instructed to consult with Gianfrancesco re. the billeting of soldiers. The Venetian intention to send these men is confirmed by another letter written by the Doge on the same day Arch. Gon. B.1419, fol. 4: ".....alias nostras poni facimus in ordine pro mittendo ad loca vostra." The Venetians were also raising men in Ravenna at this time. The Venetians did not quibble over Gianfrancesco's requests for men and protection: "... dicimus q. bene intelleximus requisitionem vram. super qua non fecimus deliberationem. Sed mag. Vra. debet esse certissima q.m. occurrente casu provisionis in vestram complacentiam faciemus debitum provisionem."
83. Arch. Gon. B.1419, fol. 6. The details are as follows: Taddeo Marchese (100 lances), Folco and Antonello (63 lances), Giovanni Magini (50 lances), Giugliano da Siena (50 lances), Giovanni de Sanguinacis (63 lances), Bianchino da Feltre (50 lances), Bussino de Urbino (40 lances), Scarioto de Faventia (40 lances), Strangelinum de Moreobiato (50 lances),

Pietro Giampaolo Orsini (186 lances), Ludovico Cane (88 lances), Abbatem de Petramala (31 lances). fol. 16 (23rd Feb.) in the same busta refers to a complaint by Gianfrancesco that he is unable to accomodate so many men. On 9 February Lorentino de Valus, captain of Turricelli, had complained to Venice of a considerable shortage of grain for his troops ('Maximum penuriam') and Gianfrancesco was instructed to send 1,000 'stariis' of grain (B.1419, fol. 19).

84. Arch. Gon. B1419, fol. 7, 13 Jan.: ".....et mitteremus aliis nostris gentibus quas habemus et de tempore in tempus habemus ad fronteras." Troops were not to be moved without previous authorisation from Venice. B.1419, fol. 14, 23 Jan.: the Venetians were frightened that Carmagnola "in ipso castro ponere volebat" and decided to send Battista Bevilaqua there together with 50 lances.
85. Arch. Gon. B.1419, fol. 8, 13 Jan: "...faciemus presto armare et poni in ordine et galeonos 12 ac barchos 20."
86. Arch. Gon. B1419, fol. 22, 18 Feb.
87. ibid. "...nullam facuimus differentia..."
- 87a Arch. Gon. B1419, fol. 24: ".....nos advisare de promissionibus que viderent mag. vre. ....ut dictus pons minime fiat..."
88. The details of these negotiations, where the Venetian envoys were Fantino Michiel and Antonio Contarini, are reported in S.S. reg.9, fols. 76-87.
89. Arch. Gon. B.2185. There are two letters dated 20 and 22 Feb. 1426 which relate to this information.
90. For a discussion of numbers see Romanin, op. cit., pp.85/6.
91. Sanuto gives detailed lists for 1426/7 (col.990). See also Ricotti, op. cit. p.445 note xvi. Such detailed lists do not appear for Milan during this period but Romanin suggests that the Milanese army was comparable in size. Fazio in his "De Viris Illustribus" (p.63) says about the armies: "quia major memoria mea exercitus in Italia non erat visus".
92. For details of this see S.S. reg. 9, fol. 65.
93. On 23 January 1426 Gianfrancesco wrote to Francesco de Catabene, the Mantuan ambassador in Ferrara, in which he requested him to seek advice from Este about the timing of the publication of the league in his territories. Gianfrancesco was unsure because negotiations were still going on with Filippo Maria at this time: ".....non comprehendimus attenti tenorem predictorum quod habuerimus publicationem ip. us lige fieri facere et (quantus) habuerimus ipsam publicatam facere in terris Serenissimi ducalis dni. Venetiarum. Multam fecimus cogitamine super hoc." This further illustrates how cautious he was even at the last moment. In the end he preferred to wait for information from Donato de'Prete. See Arch. Gon. B.2185 (Chancery Minutes.).
94. A copy of this is in Arch. Gon. B.2194, fol. 71, 7 Feb. 1426. Gianfrancesco requested this of the governor as a personal favour ("mihi grandem faciet complacentiam"). Even after the outbreak of hostilities Gianfrancesco was still consulted over the engaging of men. For instance, on 12 March 1426 Foscari sent a certain Jacopo de



Quistella to Mantua "...quoniam misit ad presentiam nostram cancel-larium suam petientes cassari a soldo n.ro". They did not know very much about him and they requested Gianfrancesco's opinion. (Arch. Gon. B.1419, fol. 27,12 March).

95. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 7 Feb. 1426: "...vogliamo che cum la dicta littera nostra tu vadi dal prefato Governatore e tu solliciti cum la paternitate sua de haver el dicto salvoconducto, el qual obtenudo tu habi vogliamo che presto tu vadi a Fiorenza e che tu tegni ogni modo de venir cum quelli nostri che tu hai a condurre, insieme cum quelle altre gente che hano a venir in questa parte, ciò e Nicolò da Tolentino e quelle altre gente de la quale el Signor Messer lo Marchese (Este) te ha parlato." He wished to be informed immediately if there was any delay. In case the safe-conduct was not granted there were plans to move the troops' via'Frignano. Federigo was asked to take advice from Este in these circumstances.
96. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 18 January 1426, in a letter of Instructions to Donato de'Prete: ".....super facto armigerorum qd. Tarctalie que est in Anchona et comitatem suam esse debeatis cum illo Serenissimo Ducali Dominio, et sibi exponere q. parere n.ri esset q. ex.a sua procuraret habere comitivam ipsam, que ut habemus a fidedignum relatibus est comitiva optima honorum et proborum hominum, cum nos non habemus nec videamus modum posse eam procurare."
97. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 18 Jan. 1426 (Gianfrancesco to Venice). He had been advised "a potestate meo Lonadi quam Oldratus de Lampugnano venit Brixiam, et ut dicitur venit pro gubernatore ipsius civitate".
98. *ibid*: "...cum omni reverencia celsitudinem ipam. advise q. terra Lonadi non esset ullo imo. armigeris ibi deputatis defulcienda, sed si esset de vra. beneplacito posset ad ipam. terram Castrizufredi mitti Bianchinum de Feltro.....qui est Canedi."
99. *ibid*. Gianfrancesco suggested that others could be safely left in charge of Canedolo: "...remaneret aliis conductoribus lm. fulcita et ad supplementum fulcimenti ipius. Castri Castrizufredi posset conservari modi illi de quib. advisari excellentium vram. in quantum (lacuna)ipi. sibi placeri sit". In Sanuto's military list (col.990) Bianchino da Feltre provided 50 lances.
100. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 18 Jan. 1426 (Instructions to Donato de'Prete): "circa sollicitationem denariorum prestancie, et de illis 5,000 ducatis quos dixeratis nobis mississe vos per multum commendamus. Volentes quats. cum omnia sollicitudine intendere debeatis ad habendum restum ipsius prestancie."
101. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 22 Jan. 1426. (Instructions to Donato de Prete.): "...restum prestancie nre. vobis sollicitetis, vos advisantes.....de nostris propriis denariis exbursamus ultra ducatorum Xvm."
102. *eg*. Arch. Gon. B.2099, fols. 77-85.
103. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 22 Jan. 1426. (Gianfrancesco to Donato de' Prete): "...vos advisamus qm. Comes Franciscus de Codegnola transitum fecit citra Padum et Olum cum comitiva ad numerum equestrium DCC.....vos advisantes qm. interritoriis Brixie et Cremona facta est et sit reductio generalis ad fortilicia." In the same letter he advised the Venetians

that the podestà of Lonato had informed him that Marsilio de Gambara and Bartolomeo da Martinengo "cum pedestribus CC" had been sent to Salò. During the war Gianfrancesco himself was to be heavily involved in the Gardesana and especially the Riviera di Salò.

104. *ibid*: "...cum Dno. volumus etiam dicatis ipm. rogitano. qm. gentes illas quas, sua gra., dix.t mittere et dignetur, ut loca nra. frontariarum fulciri possunt, que fulcita qm. sunt, et esse veniant erit conservationem salvationem et augmentationem sua status, eum advisando q. si sibi placeret, posset in nobis remittere auctoritatem deputandi gentes ipsas ad fortilicia qm.....videremus magis oportere, mitteremus et deputaremus ad loca necessaria.
105. *ibid*: "...propter dillationem tempus in vollen.o. nos esse advisati a d.mo ipso de locis et gentes, ipse stare h.rent, et in expectando declarationem suam, qm. in hoc intervallo posset sinistra aliquid occurrere."
106. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 8 Feb. 1426: "Aviso la vostra Signoria che lo Signore di Mantova me ha tolto i. pe, credo che sapiadi la casione. Zà ha messo in cassa nostra in Mantova Francesco Ursino, se dole de mi troppo, perché ho voudo dare Guastalla ala Signoria vostra, ma credo chel ge sia magor casion cha questa fazo pocha extima de queste cosse, e prima me mangerave le ma. che assentire al suo volere."
107. *ibid*: "...e non solamente una volta, ma più volte ho scritto al dito Mess. Racello che voglia sollicitare nostro Signore, e pregallo chel ne voglia far dare logiamento per 400 cavalli in quel de Peroxa, che mai non ho habuda risposta nisuna se non si habiano gualdo che alogiare lì, in tel quale ho poca speranza...."
108. *ibid*: "....sarà mal forte a questro, senza lo Conte Francesco."
109. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 18 Jan. 1426, (Gianfrancesco to Donato): "De ellectionem dni. spectabiles militis Francesco Bembo que nobis sincere placuit, et placet vobis de congratulationem qua. fecistis secum." In B.2185, 22 Jan., Bembo was described as a man with "maturi consilii et prudentia".
110. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 22 Jan, 1426, (to Donato): "...et eum consuletis de balistariis ..... qui stare debebitur super galeoibus ul quot per galeono."
111. *ibid*: "Eam advisando qm. in galeonibus ipe. quatuor magnis erunt cum una bataiera per medium, et cum una gabia in summitate trasti, super qua stabunt homines tres, que una gabia veniet superare et abatere bataieram et totum galeonum et erunt pulera navigia, et certi .....sibi multum placebit. Qui galeoni navigabuntur a remis XXXVII per qualibs.. Alii vero quatuor erunt cum bataieris sine gabia, et his navigabuntur a remis XXXV per qualibs.. Reliqui vero quatuor erunt sine bataieris et gabis et his navigabuntur a remis XXV per qualibs.." On 12 Jan. they were in consultation with Gianfrancesco over the size of the Mantuan river fleet. They had been finding out information concerning this from Badoer and Donato de'Prete. On 8 Jan. Gianfrancesco had asked the Senate whether his fleet should consist of 10 or 12 ships. The Venetians advised him to prepare 12: "ut potentioire sumus in Pado". Arch. Gon. B.1419, fol.4.

112. S.S. reg. 9, fol. 81; Arch. Gon. B.1419, fol. 26 which was dated 6 March. Gianfrancesco was personally requested to liase very closely with Carmagnola. See also S.S. reg. 9, fol. 79: "...et ultra hoc ut omnia reguluntur et bono ordine fieri possent, detur libertas dicto Comiti et Mag. Dni. Mantue et duobus nostris de collegio mittendos Mantuam et per Ambrogio Badoero .....faciendi equitare gentes nras. contra duces Mli. et loca sua."
113. S.S. reg. 9, fol. 82. See also Battistella, pp.120-1.
114. For the illness of Carmagnola see A. Battistella "Alcuni documenti inediti sul Conte di Carmagnola." A.S.L. XXX (1903), II, pp.77-9.
115. There has not been very much written about the internal structure of armies in this period. One good account is by M. del Treppo. "Gli aspetti organizzativi, economici & sociali di una compagnia di Ventura italiana" (R.S.I., 85, iii, 1973). This was concerned with the company of Michelotto Attendolo.
116. The author of the chapter on Gianfrancesco in the "Storia di Mantova" ed. Coniglio, op. cit. says: "Nel 1421 Gianfrancesco accettò di militare a favore di Filippo Maria Visconti, ma nel 1425 se ne allontanò, sia per l'andamento della guerra tra il Visconti e Firenze, sia per la tensione venutasi a determinare tra Venezia e Milano, in seguito alla defezione del Carmagnola, che dal servizio del Visconti era passato a quello dei Veneziani." (p.449). This wild suggestion, for which he brings forward no documentary proof, is erroneous and is in conflict with the material discussed earlier on in the chapter. This account is a considerable distortion of Mantua's position at the period.
117. Arch. Gon. B.1419, fol. 26, 6 March 1426.
118. Sanuto, col. 990. Carmagnola's contribution was subsequently raised.
119. Muratori, Annali d'Italia, Vol. 22, p.101. Of the division he writes: "Non volendo i capitani cedere l'uno all'altro".
120. There have been a number of detailed factual accounts of the war itself. A very good account of this period is in Battistella's life of Carmagnola quoted above. Also, Treccani, op. cit., chps. IV,V,VI. These accounts, however, contain little or no evaluation of the rôle Gianfrancesco played in the war.
121. S.S. reg. 9, fols. 82-3. This is a very good example of the co-operation between river and land forces.
122. See - G. Simonetta "Rerum Gestarum francisci Sfortiae Mediolaneusium Ducis Commentarii," (ed. G. Soranzo) R.I.S. n.s. Vol. XXI Pt.1. p.24.
123. Pieri suggested that the infantry in Italy developed "per l'esigenza di superare la fortificazione campale" (Crisi Militare cit. p.275). See also P. Pieri, "La Scienza Militare Italiana nel Rinascimento", R.S.I. 50, ii 1933.
124. They governed "con liberta di apichare e desapichare senza far processo ne scrittura." F. Oldorici Chronaca Veneta (Mss. in the Queriniana in Brescia C.1.13). In particular, there were heavy taxes on bread. See also Battistella, op. cit., p.122; Treccani, (Br.), pp.4ff.. The

possession of this city was jealously guarded by Filippo Maria. In particular fortifications were much improved, especially the strengthening of the two city walls. He restored the 'rocchette' of Torlonga, SS. Lorenzo, Alessandro and Nazzario. Communications with the Mantovano were heavily guarded. On the character of Milanese rule in Brescia see Zanelli, "Brescia sotto Filippo Maria Visconti", cit. pp.16-7,40,51ff. Also F. Oldorici *Le Storie Bresciane* (Brescia 1858), Vol. VII, p.327.

125. Even as early as the end of 1425 Carmagnola had been in touch with Brescian dissidents; in particular Lorenzo Boni and Galeazzo Porcellaga, together with some of the most eminent among the local nobility eg. Pietro Avogadro. At the beginning of 1426 the Reccagni and Domenico del Porro were collecting sufficient wood for the building of ladders etc.. Antonio del Blonda was charged with obtaining exact measurements of the walls. Treccani (Br.) p.6.
126. The Masperani and Tommaso Pulusella were also raising men in Francia-corta and Piedmont. See Battistella, op. cit. p. 127 & S.S. reg.9, fol. 120.
127. Carmagnola sent some veterans to coach these men. The numbers in the final analysis amounted to less than 800 men. Apparently they took advantage of a weekly fair in Brescia to introduce small numbers of picked men. See Treccani (Br.), p.7.
128. Raulich, op. cit., p.663 & below note 130.
129. Of this Raulich says (p.667): "Era un opera ardita per le proporzioni gigantesche e per le continue molestie dei ducali; pure fu compiuta in quattro mesi." These earthworks cut off supplies from the Milanese.
130. See Raulich, op., cit.p.662, Treccani (Br.), p.7, Sanuto, col. 983: "Nota che a' 17 di Marzo s'ebbe la Città di Brescia a ore 14 in questo modo. Fu mandato a dire al Conte Francesco Carmagnola, Capitano Generale nostro, che presto egli andasse verso Brescia con genti, che si volevano dare alla Signoria liberamente. E subito gli furono mandati 8,000 fanti molto bene in punto. Erano nostri provveditori in campo Marco Dandolo e Giorgio Cornaro. I quali andarono ed entrarono in Brescia solum con cavalli 50 e non più. E questo fecero, accioche avessero l'uscita in loro libertà."
131. Sanuto, col. 983 (3 March).
132. Platina describes the difficulties of the siege in the following terms: "Est namque Brixia tres in partes divisa: monti adjacet ad meridiem; conversa in cacumine montis arx est, aspero ascensu et opere munitissima, a qua duo latissimi muri crebris turribus muniti, parum inter se et aequae fere distantes, per Urbem ducuntur. Descententi ab Arce per has munitiones, quas accolae Garzetam appellant, partem illam urbis, quae ad sinistrum relinquitur, Gibellini incolunt, quae vero ad dexteram, quaeque major et populosior est, tota Gulephorum factione referta habetur." (pp.311-2).
133. The massive nature of the campaign is once more attested by Sanuto in col. 984: "...e tutti i balestrieri erano sulle fuste e galeoni, ch'erano nel Po, e di Mantova, di Vicenza, e di Verona, e d'altri nostri luoghi furono mandati, e assaissimi bombarde grosse alla volta del campo, sicché quello (i.e. the citadel) fu fatto farle molto, acciocché non temesse de' nimici, e fatto che le genti tutte andassero verso Brescia."

134. See Treccani (Br.), p.8 Also Simonetta.
135. Sanuto, col. 983: Sforza "si ridussero nella Citadella Nuova, che vi avea fatto fare il Duca di Milano, nella quale era il Conte Francesco Sforza pel Duca di Milano con cavalli 300 con poche biade, vettovaglie, e strami."
136. ibid: "... e tutto il Bresciano si venne ad inclinare a darsi. Saputa questa nuova a Venezia il Lunedì Santo fu fatta grande alegrezza e fuochi e campano..." The Venetian governors in Brescia were Vittore Bragadino and Silvestro Morosini.
137. Possevino even attests that the Senate had expressly charged Gianfrancesco with the taking of Brescia whereas Carmagnola was entrusted with "aperta camporum et aggregatas auxiliares copias ab ipso retineri," (p.522). See Battistella, pp.123-4.
138. Raulich, p.664. See also Billia in R.I.S. vol. XIX, col. 87 "Jubet Franciscum Mantuanum (nam in quoque in Venetianus castris militabat) eum locum datis praesidiis custodire. Ipse (i.e. Carmagnola) ad expugnandum Portam Pilarum tendit."
139. The Senate, having consulted a number of doctors, including Guffalo, Niccolò, Giglielmo and Pietro da Venezia, Bartolomeo da Montagnara and Galeazzo da S. Sofia di Padova, agreed to such a cure "quod dictus Carmagnola, propter inconvalescentiam suam, non posset exercere gubernationem gentium nostrarum". S.S. reg. 9, fol.97.
140. S.S. reg. 9, fol. 97t.
141. S.S. reg. 9, fol. 95t., 5 April 1426: "qua. ob rem volentes ad gubernationem Brixie et gentium nostrarum providere tenentes indubie Mag.m. vram. semper reppire. prompte dispositam atque paratur ad cuncta nobis beneplacita ac quod omnia sincera fide, et diligenti cura solerte ac sapienter gubernabit." On the operations: "...sui laudaremus attente qd. applicatis bombardis antequam equitaretur in quantum vadit per transversum illius civitatis et claudere citadellam. Nichilominus relinquimus hac terminandum. M. vre. q. pns. est factis et omniam sapienter videt et considerat."
142. S.S. reg. IX, fol. 98, 9 April 1426.
143. Raulich, p.664.
144. Battistella, p.125.
145. M.A. Sabellico, Historia Rerum Venetiarum (Venice, 1718), p.492.
146. Billia, col. 87.
147. See Raulich, p.665. Since 1425 the Riveraschi had contemplated turning for help to Venice against the onerous rule of the Visconti. When the war broke out ambassadors from most of the important communities were sent to Venice (from Maderno, Gargnano, Gardone, Portese, Bedizzole). In fact, on 23 March Andrea Marcello had claimed possession of Salò in the name of Venice. What Gianfrancesco did was to complete the process of subduing the surrounding area. See F. Bettoni Storia della Riviera di Salò (Brescia 1880). Vol. 2, p.88. Also Raulich, p.665.

148. See Sanuto, col. 985; "A 30 d'Aprile s'ebbe notizia come il Signore di Mantova con circa cavalli 3,000 ha cavalcato verso Quinzano, miglia dieci appresso Brescia, e tredici appresso Cremona, e gli diede battaglia, e per que' di dentro fu fatta grandissima difesa. Ma pure alla fine ebbe il Borgo."
149. See Cronaca Veneta dalla Braidense, fol. 520t.
150. Sanuto, col. 985: "E per paura d'essere saccomannati s'accordarono, e patteggiarono di dargli frumento staja 2,000, biada da cavallo staja 8,000 e molto vettovaglia."
151. Platina (p.313) suggests that Carmagnola was well pleased with Gianfrancesco's performance: "Brixiam rediens, collaudata Mantuani virtute et solertia totus ad expugnandum partem urbis convertitur, Francesco Sfortia, qui tum in praesidio erat, acriter defendente."
152. There was one advantage from this situation. This did remove Viscontean influence in Forlì and Forlimpopoli and this consequently left Florence free to aid the Venetians in Lombardy. Este's failure was regarded as negligence by the Venetians (Cron. Ven. della Braidense fol. 520), but there was also a suggestion that the Florentines did not provide them with sufficient resources to do the job properly. See Battistella, p.126. The Florentines did, however, send Tolentino and Ludovico dal Verme to Brescia.
153. Sanuto, col. 986.
154. Sanuto, col. 985. "À 13 (May) venue nuova, come la nostra armata di Po, Capitano Francesco Bembo il Cavaliere, avea dato un gran rotta alle genti del Duca di Milano per mezzo di Cremona, e rotto loro la sua catena, che aveano messa per mezzo il Po acciocché l'armata non potesse passare all' insu. E furono morti assaissimi. Ma fu preso un galeone di que' del Marchese di Mantova. perch'egli non volle andar su, cioè il padrone con alcuni nostri in campagna." For a more detailed consideration see Raulich, op. cit., pp667-8.
155. Osio, vol. ii, p.234 no. CXXXIII: "...omnia denique sunt adversa, nec ulla sublevationis est spes.."
156. There were even suggestions that Amedeo was interested in Milan itself, but Venice would never have agreed to this. There was plan for Milan to become a free commune, but it was never settled what was to happen to the Visconti. Savoy was to have Crema, Lodi, Trezzo and all territories to the left of the Adda exclusive of Milan and Pavia. Amedeo also wanted Asti, Vercelli, Novara and even Genoa. There could be no permanent understanding along such lines.
157. For the earlier history of Asola see D. Bernoni, Le Vicende di Asola (Rome 1876) pp.109ff.
158. See above p.70 (1408).
159. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 18 Jan 1426. (Pandolfo Malatesta to Gianfrancesco): ".....et p. argentarium et iocaliorum ipsarum pignere et securitate prefate mag. cie vre. tradidi rocham Asule..... et vra. mag. cia dictam rocham Asule per dictis pigneribus continuo retinuit atque retinet..... dixi eandem praesentibus advisandam et accuratissime exorandum, quod se prepararet ad dicte roche Asule restitutionem ut tenetur et me de modis tam circa dictam rocham accipiendam, quam circa

res et pecunias suas reddendas, servandis faciat particulariter advisatum."

160. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 24 Jan. 1426 (Gianfrancesco to Pandolfo): "...cui vobis vendere libuit..." Apparently Gianfrancesco had spent a lot of money on the restoration of the fortress and he felt he was being cheated by Pandolfo.
161. *ibid*: ".....q. pdi. vri. et mei. haberent recurrere ad prefatum Serenissimum ducale Dominium, et ipsum rogitare parte vra. et mea .....iuxta parere suum et voluntatem.....debeamus aquescere, et tacitos et contentes remanere."
162. A. Benitti, Storia di Asola (Mantua 1952) gives as a reason for this: "la sua forma di governo repubblicana meglio si attagliava alle nostre costumanze." (p.295) It was more a question of fear of the Visconti than any political preference.
163. L. Mangini "Storia di Asola" (MSS, in the Queriniana H.IV.2), Bk. IV says: "fu sì grande l'alegrezza del popolo, che per ogni via si sentiva gridare 'viva S. Marco, Viva!'" Quoted in Benitti op. cit. p.296.
164. "Diae sabbati 15 zugno el Sig. Johan Francesco Gonzaga, Signor di Mantova lebe la terra de Asula." (MSS in the collection in the Municipio di Asola). See also D. Bernoni Le Vicende di Asola cit. p.109.
165. Arch. Gon. B.3369 (Affari di Asola), 23 June 1426. See also Libr. Decr. (1416-1435) fol. 304. Gianfrancesco signed this document in Brescia. See also Lib. Decr. (1429-1434) fol. 21 "Immunitates ad libitum communi et hominibus castri et terre Isolella, terras et possessiones habentibus super terr. Remedelli sup. et inf.squadra terr. Asule". The privileges were reconfirmed on the 5th of June 1436 (Lib. Decr. (1436-1446) fol. 15t.) On 8 July 1426 Filippo Maria protested to Sigismund about the progress which the enemy had made. "Augentur continuo vires hostiles et multiplicatur inimicorum exercitus: dominantur Brixie obsident citadellas quas tenemus, repagulis eas cingunt studentque recludere, ne amplius eis prestemus ulla presidia, et ud ad manus perveniant tandem suas. Occupaverunt Asulam que nobis rebellavit; recuperarunt Castrum novum et Maccasturnum cum eorum armata que ausa est Placentinam et Papiam usque navigare, predans, rapiens et incendens quicquid potest." Osio, Vol. II, no.XXXIII.
166. The inscription on the Rocca Magna of Asola is a further testament to the feelings of the Asolani: "Tandem a Tirranide Vicecomitorum Asula cum hominibus suis liberata est 1426 P.S."
167. The rocche of Asola were being restored, a new moat was being constructed. Also there was continuing work on the fortifications of Castiglione delleStiviere, Peschiera and Marmirolo. See Benitti, op. cit., p.298.
168. Arch. Gon. B.1419, fol. 28, 16 June 1426: "...quod ex illius adeptione magna comoditas et securitas terrae et locis vre. Magnificentie circumstantibus.....contenti sumus et volumus quod ipsam terram Asulam cum eius fortilicious quamquam per gentes nros. adeptes sit Mag. vre. remaneat et illam nobis libere relaxamus."
169. Arch. Gon. B.15 (Investitures from Venice), fol. 21, 16 March 1428.

170. It is interesting to note that the 'balance of power' attitude by Florence is characteristic of her position throughout the 15th century. Venice was involved in secret negotiations at this time encouraging other areas to rebel against Milan, especially Cremona. They were continually urging the Florentines and Este to rearm. There were 'grids' against the Malatesta and other ducal allies and commercial embargoes.
171. See Battistella, p. 128; Raulich, p.667.
172. Comparoni, quoted by Battistella (p.128) states of Tolentino: "non sofferendo questo di sottostare all'altro perché era nato d'ignobile sangue e non era senza una disdicevole alterigia."
173. Arch. Gon. B.2094, fol. 72, 23 Oct. 1426. (Gianfrancesco to Paola): "Questo castello è bombardado e fino aqui asai lentamente per rispetto de manchamento de prede e polvere e zeneralmente de zaschuna cosa..."
174. Battistella, p.128: "A tali gare alla fine posa termine il Gonzaga che con efficaci regioni poté indurre costui a deporre quei vani cavilli e tenere uniti gli animi."
175. Platina, pp.313-314: "Philippi copiae ex Hetruria ac Flaminia excitae, agrum Mantuanum ingressae, huc atque illuc discurrentes tempestarunt .....Angelus Pargulanus, Philippi jussu, longe ac late omnia populatur, quo Principem Mantuanum ad sua tuenda abstraheret." See also Treccani (Br.), p.15.
176. eg. Billia, col. 88: "...motis ad agros Mantuanos castris feruntur, quequa incedunt, omnia igni pervastantes. Tum vero illi acrius instant diurnisque et nocturnis certaminibus obsessos fatigant vias impediunt, ne qua commeatus possint inferri." Possevino (p.525) says "Ionnem de la Pergola, cum octingenti equitibus, tote Mantuano agro, rapinas agro, rapinas agere, et incendia miscere..."
177. Possevino, p.525:
178. Platina, p.314.
179. S.S. reg.9, fols. 129-131, 9 June 1426. This happened again in August and September (fols. 170-1).
180. S.S. reg.9, fol. 130. Filippo Maria's terms at this stage were the cession of Brescia and province to Venice and the restoration of Genoa.
181. For instance, there is a letter dated 14 March 1427 in which he requests her to return from a visit to her father because of his imminent departure to Venice to discuss the peace negotiations at Ferrara. Arch. Gon. B.2094, fol. 75.
182. Arch. Gon. B.43, fol.93, 10 March 1426.
183. Arch. Gon. B.43, fol. 80, 2 July 1426: "Dicti homines possunt se reducere.....secure ad et in terra Guastalla..." In addition, any Mantuans who owned property in Guastalla were guaranteed immunity by Guido.
184. Arch. Gon. B.43, fol. 83, 3 July 1426: "Et si pur contingeret aliquas ex dictis gentibus prefati ducis Mediolani veniet de dicto territorio... ad offensionem predicatas terras....q. dicte gentes....p. eorum facta



non receptabuntur in terris...nec eis aliqualliter dabitur auxilium... tam eundo q. redundo." This was to last for the month of July.

185. They were urging Carmagnola to be as energetic as possible and promised reinforcements to try and finish the job off quickly. S.S. reg.9, fol. 172, 28 Sept.
186. On the 12 Aug. and 6 Sept. respectively. See Raulich, p.163 and Battistella, p.136.
187. Battistella (p.136) suggests that Carmagnola was trying to bribe Landriano, a former comrade in arms, to surrender. But Landriano must have realised by now that it was only a matter of time. See Sanuto, col. 988.
188. S.S. reg.9, fol. 174.
189. Battistella, p.140. Also Sanuto, col. 988: "A 10 di Novembre s'ebbero lettere de' nostri Provveditori a Brescia, cioè Fantino Michiel e Pietro Loredano procuratori, come col nome di Dio e di Messere San Marco aveano fatto accordo con que' del castello di Brescia di dar loro il detto Castello liberamente a ore 20. E aveano avuto gli ostaggi, cioè il fratello del Castellano, e i sei figuoli d'altri migliori di loro, con questa condizione, che le munizioni ed arme che ivi dentro sono, sieno dati a que soldati che sono ivi dentro, e altre ciò debbono rendere loro il fratello bastardo del Signor di Mantova a altri prigionieri."
190. Arch. Gon. B.2094, fol. 72. Gianfrancesco writes of his efforts with modesty: "...benché l'onore e le laude diano esser date aquelli da che prezedo zaschuna bene, e zerto non soy così ingrato che nol conoscha, e che no ma riordi del salmista che dixie "non nobis domine, non nobis per nomini tuo da gloriam"..... al presente asai e ben previsto e melio paro soligitar quello bixogna benché domani se fa una scorta zenerale dove bixognara che sia...de la parte ve asai bona speranza e quaxi certeza."
191. Arch. Gon. B.1419, fol. 30, 22 Oct. The Doge urges Gianfrancesco to persist in re-negotiating a treaty with Mirandola and appreciates how anxious he was to keep the Venetians as well informed as possible: "quemquam non intendit vre. mag. facere absque voluntate et scientia nri. domini." It was clear that Venice appreciated the strategic significance of this treaty, but they make it plain that this is to be a personal treaty: "Verum. dominium, nec ligam quod solum treguam predictam faciat m. vre. suo nomine proprio." Venice did not want its hands tied too much.
192. Platina (p.315) says of the ferocity of the siege: "Bombardis dies ac noctu pulsati..."
193. For confirmation see Commissioni, vol. 1, no. 49.
194. In the "Istorie Fiorentine", IV, 13.
195. For details of the controversies see Battistella, pp.141-4. In fact, the peace was not finally ratified by Milan until 12 Feb. 1427. One of the major stumbling blocks was Carmagnola's property. See S.S. reg.9, fol. 188-90. It was eventually agreed that his family should be returned to him together with all his property in the dutchy (S.S. reg. 10 fol.1).

196. At this time he was urging Sigismund to send a force of 5,000 cavalry into Friuli.
197. Sigismund had advised him not to give anything to the Venetians, whom he regarded as rebels.
198. S.S. reg.10, fol. 12.
199. Andrea Morosini was sent by the Senate to Rome in order to explain that it was Filippo Maria's fault that the peace had been violated, not Venice's. See Battistella, p.149.
200. See Osio, Vol. II, p.314, no. CXCIV: "Deponite togas et libros et arma capessite."
201. Osio, Vol. II., p.315, no. CCIX.
202. Arch. Gon. B.2094, fol. 75, 14 March 1427 (Gianfrancesco to Paola): "De la paxe che ql. fine a qui habia abudo da Ferrara non e stado de troppo importantia."
203. *ibid*: "A Venexia mess. Donado (de'Preti) e Francesco (de'Catabene) e dolor aspecto lavixo del mio andar perché alcune faxende che alor stanero a praticchar che no. faria a mi voria che fosseno spazato innanziché le andare, e questa e la caxo della tardeza del mio andar de la qual voio che vavixate el S. nostro padre (Maletesta Malatesta), e credo questa induxia non poder resulatar se non bene perché pur se vederà o parose comprender el fine della pace o guerra."
204. See Battistella, p.151, note 5.
205. Arch. Gon. B.43, fol. 98, 16 March 1427: "...anzi serà lasado passare le dita Armada suxo e zoxo como se fusse larmade propria del mio Illustrissimo Signore Duca de Milano." "According to Sanuto (col.992) the Venetian river fleet had been reinforced in the previous February: "A 26 di Febbraio fu preso nel consiglio de Cento di far 1000 lance di nuovo, oltre a quelle che si faranno per la lega, e etiam di fare un Capitano nel Po, e d'armare subito 30 galeoni. E fu eletto Stefano Contarini, che fu di Ser Niccolo capitano."
206. Arch. Gon. B.43, fols. 100 & 103, 17 March 1427.
207. Arch. Gon. B.43, fol. 112, 17 Apr. 1427. There had also been consultations with Edoardo del Fante, the Podestà of Mirandula: "Volens qm. fidem habeant plene qs. ferventer ut reliqua in dictis capitulis contenta servari debent."
208. Arch. Gon. B.1419, fol. 31, 22nd March 1427 (Venice to Gianfrancesco). The plan was to send "cancellarium Mag. Dom. Malateste.....ad removendum Carolum cognatum vrm. a serviciis ducis Mediolani." They even went as far as to guarantee Carlo and his men free passage through the Mantovano and Veneto.
209. Arch. Gon. B. 1419, fol. 33. This was repeated on 30 April in almost identical terms in fol. 32. The Venetians were also keeping Gianfrancesco informed of the state of negotiations with the Lord of Faenza.
210. *ibid*: "...qui habeat bonam vigilantiam et diligentem advertentiam ad securitatem et conservationem dicte nostre armate per modum q. aliquid sinistrum sibi non accidit."

211. S.S. reg. 10, fol. 45t, 12 April 1427: "...cum utile sit providere de habendo pro agendis occurrentibus apud magnif. dnum. Mantue unum nobilem qui provideat ad occurrentia, et nos continue adviset et informet de omnibus."
212. Pietro Loredano and Fantino Michiel were instructed to gather all men in the Vicentino and Veronese and send them to the Mantovano (S.S. reg. 10, fol. 43).
213. S.S. reg.10, fol.44.
214. Sanuto, col. 994-6.
215. See Battistella, p.158.
216. *ibid*: pp.159-60.
217. Arch. Gon. B. 2094, fols. 77-86 incl.
218. For the background to this, see A. Parazzi, Origini e Vicende di Viadana (Viadana Remigi 1893), Vol. II, p.3.
219. Arch. Gon. B.15, fol.17, 4 July 1427: "Intellectis litererum vre. mag. datis in campo apud Sablonetam die primis presentis quibus nobis indicastis obtentione terre et loci Sablonetae etc. Respondemus vobis q. illari animo et iocunde audivimus litteris vestras p.dctis."
220. Arch. Gon. B.15, fols 40-1. In 1432 Sigismund declared that these territories were to belong perpetually to the house of Gonzaga. Gianfrancesco was infeudated with them by Sigismund when he joined Milan in 1438. In 1437 this was completed by the incorporation of Dosolo on the 24 July. Gianfrancesco was allowed to keep Sabbioneta by the terms of the Peace of Cavriana in 1442. See also Platina, p. 320.
221. S.S. reg.10, fol. 76.
222. Battistella suggests that Carmagnola was intending to isolate Cremona as much as possible (p.162).
223. cf. P. Pieri "Scienza Militare" cit. p. 273: "...innegabile e la tenenza alle guerre lente, alle mosse studiate, sia per il prevalere della fortificazione campale, sia anche per il timore di sacrificare tutto in un giorno."
224. For more details of the battle see Battistella, pp.164-5.
225. He complained that Filippo Maria had taken Borgo S. Donnino away from him.
226. Arch. Gon. B.43, fol. 115 & 118. One of Gianfrancesco's secretaries Petro de Arrivabene was the intermediary with Pallavicino. Sanuto notes (col. 996) of Pallavicino: "il quale è Signore di molti castelli, e gli fu promesso di dargli ogni anno provigione per la sua persona Lire 1500 di grossi, e di dargli lancie 100 di condotta sino a 120."
227. Quoted in Possevino, p.526: "Magna animi nostri laetitia et totus Senatus nostri accepimus virtutis ac vigilantiae tuae fructum."
228. Osio, Vol. II, pt. 2, no. CCXXVIII" Hostes enim sunt potentes tam per terram. quam per aquam, et dietim aliqua mihi surripiunt."

229. Around the beginning of July (S.S. reg.10, fol.61.). At the very same time Milanese envoys were active in negotiations with Sigismund and Alfonso of Aragon. The Senate saw the real motives behind Filippo Maria's moves.
230. Arch. Gon. B.2094, fols. 84, 85.
231. Arch. Gon. B.2094, fol. 86: "ad videndum et examinandum lignarium ipsam et ipsarum quantitatem et talem volumus mittatis Casalemajus q. ibi stet et expectet donec illuc venerit aliqua novis armata..."
232. On the way a number of smaller castles were captured including Urago d'Oglio and Iseo, both of considerable strategic importance.
233. S.S. reg.10, fols. 89-90, 94t (6 Oct 1427). There is another similar complaint in 1429 (reg. XI, fol.10).
234. According to a letter of Filippo Maria (Osio, vol. II, p.340, no. CCXXI) this is the most likely date, although other sources indicate otherwise. The 15, 16 and 28 Oct. have been put forward, but the 11 is supported by Cambi, Buonaccorso Pitti and the Cronaca di Cremona. See Battistella, pp.190ff for a discussion of this point.
235. D. Carafa, Gli Ammaestramenti Militari (Naples, Campanile 1608).
236. Numbers involved in Macclodio: Venice - 18,000 cavalry and 8000 infantry: Milan. 12000 cavalry and 6000 infantry.
237. Possevino and Equicola once again overemphasised the part Gianfrancesco played but Platina's assessment is a much more credible one:  
"Transierant jamjam aliquot equitum turmae, cum subito Mantuanus Princeps, Carmignola signum pugnae proponente, in confertissimae hostium acies sese cum suis infert" (p.321).
238. Osio, Vol. II, p.340, no. CCXXI.
239. Battistella, p.199.
240. Sanuto, col. 997.
241. S.S. reg. 10, fol. 97, 17 Oct, 1427: ".....una puleram et honorabilem domum in Venetiis, quam volumus donare sibi ac filii et heredibus suis legitimis".
242. See also ibid. fol. 239, 15 Feb, 1428. The value of the house quoted here is 5,800 ducats.
243. ibid.
244. Campaigns in late October around Orcinuvio (Pontoglio, Castruzzato, Roccafranca, Chiari) and small gains in the Bergamasco.
245. Sanuto, col. 998: "E infino a qui nostri ebbero circa 80 fortezze tra il Bresciano e il Bergamasco".
246. Sanuto, col. 1000.
247. For confirmation of this date see Arch. Gon. B.1181, letter of 17 April 1428 from Este to Gianfrancesco.
248. According to Arch. Gon. B.1181 (4 Dec. 1427) Gianfrancesco was still at Casalmaggiore.

249. Arch. Gon. B.2094, fol. 93, 30 Dec. 1427 (Gianfrancesco to Paola.):  
 "....e per lo dicto nostro figliuolo interamente serà observato tutto quello se permette." Also B. 1419, fol. 36. Gianfrancesco was also in Venice at the end of January 1428. According to instructions issued to Azzone Trevisan, ambassador to Carmagnola, recorded in S.S. reg. 10, fol. 117t, 30 Dec. 1427, Gianfrancesco had been consulted while he was in Venice about the future strategy in the Valcamonica, Valle S. Martino, and the Valle Biombana. Carmagnola was given strict instructions to spend the winter in Brescia.
250. Arch. Gon. B. 1181, 21 Nov. 1427. Este's position in these discussions, in his own words, is "come mediatore e non come giudice". Even Albergati was getting impatient "perché lui non vede che cum suo honore e prima per lo honore del papa lui possa più stare in questi longore".  
 Albergati was waiting for the final replies from the ambassadors. It is interesting to note that Este had a very low opinion of the Savoyard ambassadors ("pure deshoneste").
251. Arch. Gon. B.43, fol. 121, item no. 2. Also fol. 124 which contains a detailed list of their replies to the demands of the league.
252. i. Arch. Gon. B.43, 29 Nov. 1427 (Este to Gianfrancesco). Apparently the Florentines were backing the Venetians over this at the time.  
 ii. Arch. Gon. B.43, fol. 124, item 5: "cum ipse dominus Dux Mediolani non fuit prius controfactor pacis ut clarissime ostendetur."
253. S.S. reg 10, fols. 129-30, 140.
254. Arch. Gon. B.15, fol. 21.
255. Arch. Gon. B.15, fols. 25-6 (15 & 18 May 1428).
256. Sanuto gives 18 April but Este's letters in Arch. Gon. B.1181 for 17 April suggest otherwise, although the formal announcement was not made until the following day.
257. See Lünig, op. cit., Vol. IV, col. 1686. Also Osio, Vol. II, p.367.
258. Osio, Vol. II, p. 373. Arch. Gon. B.43, fols. 133-8.
259. In Arch. Gon. B.1181, 22 April 1428 (Este to Gianfrancesco) Niccolò comments on this point.
260. Sanuto, col. 1002 and Battistella, p.221.
261. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 20 Sept. 1428 (Foscari to Marco Dandolo): "Nosque per inde stricterogavit ut si possibile sit ab ipso S. Rege, in casu quo ad trenguas ul. concordia cum sua Serenitate Veniamus istud obtinere curemus".
262. *ibid*: "In hoc casu procuretis.....omnibus vris. ingeniis et.... studeatis obtinere ab ipso S. Rege in solemnis et valida forma qm. M.D. prefuatus Mantue creatur Marchio Mantue, et q. ad ipsum titulum et dignitatem Marchionatus Mantue permoveatur, et perpetuo in suis heredibus insignatur et decoretur."

263. *ibid.*
264. S.S. reg.10, fol. 221.
265. Sanuto, col. 1003: mentions slightly different numbers. "In questo tempo il conte di Carmagnola per mezanità del Marchese di Mantova, fu fatto capitano general de terra e dell'armada del Po, con provision de ducati 1000 al mese per guerra e 6,000 per pace all'anno, et condotta de cavalli 2,000 et fanti 200." Arch. Gon. B.1228, fol. 9, 9 January 1429. (Jacopo Ziliolo in Ferrara to Gianfrancesco): "Habuit dominus meus a Comite Carmagnola qm. petiit licentiam ipe. a Loysius del Verme a dno. Venetorum. Et q. nullo pacto vult amplius stare ad stipendia sua. Et q. sperat obtinere istam licentiam."
266. See S. Davari, Notizio Storiche intorno allo Studio Pubblico (Mantua 1903) p.4.
267. Arch. Gon. Lib. Decr., 9 Nov 1429 and 9 Nov 1431 respectively.
268. Arch. Gon. B.2094, fol. 98, 22 Aug. 1429 (Gianfrancesco to Paola from Fossadalberi): "Un famulo de Messer Ronaldo da Preti pregandome che fosse contento tolesti apresso di voi una fiola del fiolo suo Bonifacio .....azò che havesse la commodità del studio." She was 11 years old. All of Gianfrancesco's own children, especially Cecilia, were models of what a high standard of education could achieve.
269. See Muratori, vol. 22, p.109; "Cronaca di Rimini" R.I.S.Vol. 5; Buonincontrus "Annali" R.I.S.Vol. 21.
270. See Partner, "The Papal State under Martin V" cit., pp.93-4 for the background to this.
271. Muratori, Vol. 22, p.110: "Avea questi (Malatesta di Pesaro) dopo la morte di Carlo preteso, siccome legittimo, d'escludere i nipoti bastardi alla di lui eredità con fare anche ricorso per questo a Papa Martino. In sua parte nulla ottenne, e solamente servivano le istanze sue a fare che il papa inviate cola l'armi sue, s'impadronisse d'alcune terre."
272. Arch. Gon. B.1181, 28 Oct. 1429 (Leonello to Paola:) "...volle havere le rasone sue raccomandate come proprie, a tanto più cordialmente quando li intervenne le vre. preghiere e la interpositione de la M.V. per la quale faria ogni cosa a lui possibile."
273. Arch. Gon. B. 1181, 16 Jan 1431 (Este to Gianfrancesco:) "...et postea lente multum processum fuerat in causa illa. Et q. timebant (i.e. Elizabetta and Roberto) q. res ista traheretur in longum, nisi aliter debeat terminari, provideremus cum amicis nostris qm. causa ista cito termineretur." There are copies of the letters of Astorre Buzolini to Elizabetta in the Arch. Gon. which give an excellent indication of how difficult Martin was over this. (B.2185, 4, 6, 9 Jan 1430). Elizabetta had great confidence in Este and Gianfrancesco: "Quia indubie sperabant q. per manus nras. concordia ista fieret..."
274. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 16 Feb. 1430 (Corrado to Gianfrancesco:) "...cum reverenza me pare che la vostra S. ha bisogna havere grandissima consideratione".

275. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 16 Feb, 1430 (Instructions to Francesco de Catabene): "Cum lo dicto Iuliano (famulo del Signor misser lo Marchese) riguardate etiam de li Signora Malatesti, e fare cum luy mancho rasonamento che tu poi, demonstrandogie tu non sapere cosa alcuna."
276. Niccolò was very anxious to consult personally with Gianfrancesco over this matter. See Arch. Gon. B.1228, fol. 15,25 Jan. 1430. (Jacopo Ziliolo to Gianfrancesco): "Luy ha grandissimo desiderio de abochare cum vuy per questi facti de Romagna, e per li soi da Roma." This last refers to the question of Leonello's recognition in the succession discussed below.
277. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 7 Feb. 1430 (Instructions to Catabene): "...considerando la parentade che sono stati dal Signor Carlo a la casa nostra, de mia sorella del quale nuy siamo desesi e etiam la prefata madonna nostra madre che era consorte del prefato signore Carlo fu sorella del Signor nostro padre, pregamolo che li dicti Signori gie sia raccomandati digiandoli che se rendiamo certi che a la Sanctitade Sua e a Sancta Chiesa seranno fideli."
278. See Billia. col. 116. Senigaglia (previously belonging to Carlo Malatesta) granted to Malatesta of Pesaro. Martin recovered Cervia, Osimo, Fano, La Pergola, Borgo San Sepolcro and many minor castles. See Partner, p. 94 and Muratori, p. 112. See Uberto Strozzi's letter in Arch. Gon. B. 1228, fol. 17, 13 May 1431. See also Arch. Gon. B. 1081, 12 July 1431; Galeazzo and Carlo Malatesta was still asking Gianfrancesco to intercede on their behalf over Pesaro.
279. There is a very interesting letter from Elisabetta Varano to Gianfrancesco dated 24 Aug. 1430 (Arch. Gon. B.1081) in which she writes of a marriage which Gianfrancesco had arranged between Gismondo Pandolfo Malatesta and a daughter of Carmagnola. Despite the disagreements which had taken place between the two men, this would indicate that their relationship was still fairly close.
280. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 7 Feb. 1430 (Instructions to Francesco Catabene): "...venessero al rasonamento circa lo facto de la Bolla de Leonello. Et breuiter foe terminato e concluso tra nuy chel prefato Signore dovesse mandar a Roma messer Ziliolo fiolo de Jacomo Ziliolo e Zuliano del Munaro cum li quali tu te dovesse ritrovar a la presentia del Papa circa la impetrazione de la dicta Bolla per la quale lo prelibato Signore venga ad esser investito, e manchando luy, che Leonello solo vegna ad esser unico e legittimo successore....e per suoi fioli legittimi."
281. *ibid.* "...narrandolgi per parte nostra quando redundarà al contentamento a honor nostro la concessione de la dicta Bolla, che quando cusi non havesse luogo se poe pensare lo mal contentamento e la vergogna vignassemo ad havere, demostrandogie etiam dio quando questo vene ad esser confirmatione del parentado et amicitia che sono stati longo tempo tra la Illustre casa de Este, e la nostra, e conservatione de li stati de luna parte e de l'altra.... E per tanto supplica strettamente a la Sanctitade Sua per nostra parte se digni condescendere a questo, e che non voglia che alchuna indignatione la quala havesse contra lo prelibato Signore, se alchuna se ne ritrovasse havere, in specialitade per non haver lo debito suo del Censo....advisandolo che lo prefato Signore trovamo ben disposto a far lo lo dovere suo como sempre havemo trovato.."

282. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 10 March 1430: (Instructions to Catabene):  
 "Se maravejamo molto che tu non habi scritto de la principal nostra  
 fazenda de la quala desideravamo sopra ogni altra cosa de sentir  
 ..... molto ne recresse tanta dilatatione."
283. Arch. Gon. B. 1228, fol.15, 25 Jan.1430 (Ziliolo to Gianfrancesco):  
 "Io ho visto la copia de la Bolla la quale haviti facto reformare.  
 Et e vero Signor mio che tante facte nove che non sege podesse  
 trovare exceptione. Et anche se Papa non la faria mai ad quel modo perche  
 non obbligarla mai prima lui poi li soi successori ad dovere fare  
 la investixione. Et per tore via ogni dubieza, e piccolo,  
considerato quello è facto ad quelli di Arimino, me pareva, chel se  
 havesse ad cercare chel papa innovasse e investisse el Signore e dopo  
 luy Leonello, e manchando senza fioli, fosse investato li fradelli  
 quali elegesse el Signor. Et facesse el Papa la investixione, al modo  
 de tute le altre del Signore. Et non li volesse innovare nove obligatione  
 e graveze più de l'usato. Et questo bastarà e seremo fora de ogni  
 pericolo, e sarà la cossa valida."
284. Arch. Gon. B.217, fol.15, 5 Jan.1431: "Effecto che el dicto Magnifico  
 et Inclito Leonello suo figliuolo e immediate successore et Signor et  
 Vicario Generale de Sancta Chiesa in la città de Ferrara et in tuto  
 quello che de la prefata Sancta Chiesa el Prefato Illustre et excelso  
 Sig. Mess. lo Machexe tene al presente e tenesse per lo advenir."  
 There was the provision that no other child should supplant Leonello  
 in order of succession "senza alchuna exceptione". The contract  
 itself is dated the same day in B.217 fol.18 in which Leonello is  
 named as "Primo genito et unico successore". See also fol.19.
285. In fact, on the 2 July 1428 the castle of Melaria had been pledged  
 by Gianfrancesco as security for a loan which he had raised from  
 Niccolò. See Arch. Gon. B. 1181, 2 July 1428 (Este to Gianfrancesco)
286. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 19 March 1428: letter to Baptista Malatesta from  
 her sister in Rome. There was also a suggestion that Carlo Gonzaga should  
 marry into the same family.
287. "Li ambassadori del duca sum anchora a Vinexia e la principale caxone,  
 e la causa del Marchexe de Monfera, é questa differentia del Cremonexe....  
 In March 1430 Gianfrancesco was very concerned about the security of the  
 river areas and was clearly disturbed at the excessive expense which  
 its protection involved. There were discussions over the nature of  
 Venice's contribution in S.S. reg.11., fol. 83t, 1 March 1430. On  
 24 April 1430 both Gianfrancesco and Este were summoned to Venice  
 for discussions of war preparations. (ibid., fol.10lt).
288. S.S. 11, fol.68-71. On 5 Feb. Andrea Contarini had left for Milan  
 with Lorenzo de'Medici to discuss this matter.
289. On 20 April 1429 Niccolò d'Este had returned to Ferrara from Venice.  
 This was at the time he was angry with the Florentines at the  
 difficulties over the renewal of his condotta. On the 21 April Ziliolo  
 wrote to Gianfrancesco: "... E parso ela Signoria che luy se toglia  
 dali Fiorentini come da cativi homeni, e mali pagaturi tute quallo  
 chel ne puo havere. Et de loro Fiorentini quella Signoria ha dicto  
 male asay. Et de loro facti se sum molto doluti e lamentati, digando  
 brutte parole da loro." Arch. Gon. B. 1228, fol.11.



290. Arch. Gon. B. 1228, 6 June 1429 (Ziliolo go Gianfrancesco): "El Rev. mo. Cardinale de Sancta Croce parti questa matina de qui, e va per andare ad Imola dove se debe ritrovare el Governadore. Et dove sia le cosse disposte ala pace remanerà li tanto che la pace sia conclusa, e poi subito vole ritornare a Roma.....Lui non ha speranza già che la possa haver loco." See also S.S. reg. 11, fols. 107-8.
291. See Battistella, pp. 252ff.
292. S.S. reg. 11, fols. 112-4.
293. Arch. Gon. B. 1419, fol. 40, 19 Oct, 1430. Information had been relayed to them by Jacopo Michiel, their special envoy to Mantua. For the Guastalla fortress see Arch. Vz. S.S. vol. 11, 138t., 25 Sept. 1430.
294. Arch. Gon. B. 1419, fol. 38. Este was much more cynical about the whole business. See also fol. 39, 8 Jan. 1430.
295. S.S. reg. 11, fol. 131.
296. Sanuto, col. 1015.
297. Platina, p. 324.
298. S.S. reg. 11, fols. 163-4.
299. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 20 Jan. 1431 (Gianfrancesco to Venice from Marmirolo): "Cum reverentia advisatis et filialiter loquar vel filius ad patrem. Qm. advisamentum ipm. fuit multum tarde....qm. homines mei multum sparsi sunt per villas et talem reductionem celerem non nisi cum maximo damno facere eis possibile est...." The Venetians were also involved in these negotiations. eg. on 6 Aug. 1430 they were adding their support to Niccolò and Gianfrancesco via their ambassador in Rome. S.S. reg. 11, fol.127, 6 Aug.
300. *ibid*: "....maxime attento qm. Comes Franciscus est multum propinquas ad terras meas ultra Padum qui posset prorumpere in ipm. meum territorium et damnum non parvum inferre..."
301. *ibid*. "ad ipm. Cel. vrm. filialiter p. pdcto. recurre, speravi et dertum me reddens non aliam faciet provisionem circa p. dicta qm. in propriis factis et terris suis."
302. eg. S.S. reg. 11, fols. 174-5.
303. Arch. Gon. B. 1419, fol. 43, 8 Apr. 1431. Regarding the monthly expenditure of 2,000 ducats they advise he should spend it on "gentibus equestribus et pedestribus pro bono status vre. et nostri... sicut melius M.V. videtur."
304. eg. Arch. Gon. B. 1419, fol. 42; letter of 7 April 1431 provisioning "cum huiusmodi rebus et victualibus trans territoria libere transire."
305. Arch. Gon. B. 1419, fol. 44, 30 April 1432. The supplies were to be consigned to the Captain of the Po fleet. cf. B.1419, fol. 45, 1 Dec. 1431.
306. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 20 Jan. 1431 (Gianfrancesco to Venice from Marmirolo): This explains Gianfrancesco's motives very well indeed.

307. Arch. Gon. B. 1419, fol. 40, 19 Oct.1430: "Ita tamen quod tempore ipsarum trenguarum ipse Guido super Padum non facit nec fieri permittat aliquam bastitam seu aliquid hedificii de novo in et super territorium suum."
308. Arch. Gon. B. 43, fol.151.
309. Arch. Gon. B. 43, fol.154: "..... non saria fati alchuno hedificio, ne bastida suvra el Po, in suxo el territorio de Guastalla..." Torello signed this document personally "a mazore fermeza de le soprascripte cose". His envoys to Mantua for these negotiations had been Giovanni Boniano and Bernardo de'Albertani.
310. Arch. Gon. B.43, fols. 171-2, 31 Dec.1431. Gianfrancesco's secretary entrusted with this was Venturino de Arrivabene.
311. Arch. Gon. B. 43, fols, 179-81. The Mantuan representative was Antonio Belliardo.
312. Arch. Gon. B. 1419. fols. 42-3. 7 And 8 April 1431. The Venetians had every confidence in Gianfrancesco. "sumus certissimi quod non facietis nisi aliud quod possit redundare ad eadem honore et utilitate status Vri. et nostra." It would seem that Gianfrancesco's representative was Feltrino de Gonzaga. Both he and Galeazzo were used from time to time. It is not clear what their precise relationship to Gianfrancesco was. Feltrino de Gonzaga probably belonged to the Reggio Branch of the family and Galeazzo is described by Sanuto as a "fratello bastardo" of Gianfrancesco.
313. Details of the negotiations are in Arch. Gon. B.43, fols. 157-60. This was again primarily to secure the safety of the Mantovano. Giovanni and Francesco della Mirandula had sent Edoardo del Fante, the Podestà, to Mantua in the previous May (B.43, fol.162). Niccolò d'Este who was very closely concerned with the outcome of the negotiations had sent his secretary Petrus de Girondis. It would appear that the first approach was made by Este and Gianfrancesco on behalf of the league "... ad concludendum st firmandum bonam fidem et legalum trengvam et sufficientiam cum contrabando.."
314. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 22 Jan.1431 (Gianfrancesco to Venice from Marmirolo).
315. See Osio, Vol. III, p.7.
316. Battistella, p.266.
317. Arch. Gon. B. 1419 fol. 188 7 June 1431.
318. Battistella, p.275. "Era una bella rivincita su Macloadio e tanto piu vergognosa per Venezia che in fatti di marineria era ritenuta superiore agli altri stati d'Italia." See Osio, vol. III, p.21.
319. S.S. reg.11, fols. 203-4. See Battistella, p.287.
320. See Battistella, pp.292ff.
321. Possevino, Bk. V, p.532.

322. His intention was to be crowned Emperor, but Filippo Maria was hoping to get his active help against the Venetians.
  323. For example see S.S. reg. 12, vol X. fols 27ff.
  324. S.S. reg.12, fol.52.
  325. Arch. Gon. B. 1419, fol.46, 12 Jan.1432. (Venice to Gianfrancesco).  
"Vram. i. mag. hortamur, et paterne rogamus, ut qm. vobis videbitur ipsius congruum ac res n. ras pertinum illar. esse in tale termino et securitate reductas quod in status nro. nullum videatur esse periculum."  
On 19 Jan. (fol.47) Badoer was once again sent to confer with Gianfrancesco.
  326. Osio, vol. III, p.62. at the end of the month the Senate sent Taddeo Giustinian to negotiate with Pallavicino and he was instructed to consult very closely with Gianfrancesco over this. S.S. reg.12, fol. 64t, 31 Jan.1432. A letter was written to Gianfrancesco requesting his help. It could be argued that this was an attempt to convince him that they had his interests at heart.
  327. Battistella, p.341: "Ma le lagnanze del Gonzaga, anco se vere, non erano ne le prime che egli faceva ne gran fatto importanti."
  328. Most of the events which follow are reproduced from Battistella, pp.345ff. and Romanin, vol. IV. pp.
  329. Battistella, p.351.
  330. Arch. Gon. B. 2094, fol.115.
  331. Arch. Gon. B. 2094, fol.116: "Advisimus quod istud Serenissimus Ducale Dnum. una cum suo consilio nemine discrepante, nos in suum generale capitaneum ellegerat..."
  332. Gianfrancesco can not, therefore, have been present at Carmagnola's execution as most commentators suggest.
  333. Arch. Gon. B. 1419, fols 48-9, especially 49: "... nos non veniemus ad pacem sive concordiam cum sua Serenitate nis M. vra. restituatur et reintegretur in eiusiuribus et honorificentis consuetis."
  334. Arch. Gon. B. 1419, fol.48: "Provisionem quoque qua Vra. M. fecit in dimittendo D. Guidonem de Bagno cum nonnullis ex vris. pro securitate territori vri. plurimum laudamus."
-

CHAPTER 4

THE RELUCTANT COMMANDER

(1432-1438)

## CHAPTER 4

### THE RELUCTANT COMMANDER (1432-1438)

#### I

#### Introduction

"Fu gran nimico di questo stato nostro." 1/

This was Sanuto's final judgement on Gianfrancesco's career. It is not surprising that Sanuto, a loyal Venetian, should have added these words when he reported his death in 1444. In Sanuto's eyes Gianfrancesco appeared as a man in whom the Venetian state had placed a great deal of trust, a trust which he had betrayed at a crucial moment in 1438 when he went over to the camp of Filippo Maria Visconti.

Later commentators have echoed this judgement and have contributed to the view that Gianfrancesco's career is a typical example of that of a faithless commander. 2/ It would seem on the surface rather paradoxical that for the greater part of his active life Gianfrancesco had been one of Venice's staunchest supporters, first as second-in-command to Carmagnola, and, after 1432, as Captain General of the Venetian army.

Once again his reputation has suffered unjustly at the hands of historians, and it is the aim of this chapter to re-examine the period of Gianfrancesco's Captain Generalship in an attempt to assess more critically the value of Sanuto's judgement. In examining rather more closely than hitherto Gianfrancesco's relationship with Venice in his new capacity it will be seen that Sanuto's assessment is an unfair one. While it is undeniably true that he changed sides in 1438, how justified, in fact, was he in doing so? Is it as sudden or as capricious as scholars would have us believe, or is it the culmination of a fairly logical process? It would appear that the latter is nearer the truth.

Within the general framework the chapter will concern itself with four interrelated themes. Firstly it will examine the circumstances surrounding Gianfrancesco's appointment as Captain General of the Venetian army. Secondly, the nature of his role as military commander will be considered, especially the degree of autonomy which he had, and the nature of his working relationship both with the Senate and the Provveditori. In this respect it is also important to relate this to Mantuan policies and interests and to Mantua's relationships with other states. Thirdly, the part which Gianfrancesco played in the war when it was finally renewed in 1437 will be discussed; how faithful he was as an instrument of Venetian policy and how this coincided with military feasibility. Finally, and perhaps most crucial, there will be a detailed re-examination of the circumstances which surrounded the dramatic events of 1438 up to the time of his declaration for Filippo Maria. Up to now the various interpretations of these events have not been fully understood or properly evaluated; in particular the attitudes and motives of the three principal participants. There was as always a very powerful reason governing Gianfrancesco's actions. In fact, from the very beginning he was reluctant to accept the supreme command because the direction of the Lombard wars had changed. The conflict was now even less compatible with Mantuan interests than its first phase. Now there were real fears of Mantua's absorption. In fact, the parallelism with Carmagnola's career in this period becomes even more marked. In the end there were disagreements with Venice, the Provveditori and also a growing antagonism with Gattamelata, his second-in-command. There was no chance of complete independence or neutrality for Mantua given the nature of the conflict between Milan and Venice. Moreover, mindful of the suddenness of Carmagnola's fall from power, Gianfrancesco was not going to allow a similar fate to befall him. In other words, the decisions of 1438 were not the result of any whim; they involved, as always, the best

interests of Mantua as Gianfrancesco saw them and, furthermore, the true significance of these events can only be fully appreciated as a direct continuation of the arguments put forward in the previous chapter.

## II

### The Captain-Generalship and the Imperial Title

In many respects the execution of Carmagnola was a bold move on the part of Venice. However, as far as the Senate was concerned, the possible dangers which could ensue from this were mitigated by its suddenness and also by the fact that they were certain that Gianfrancesco would fill the gap. The Senate moved very quickly in offering the Captain Generalship to him, as we have seen, and there was nothing to indicate that he would have any qualms in accepting it.

Because the war against Milan was still in progress, continuity was of paramount importance. The Venetians wanted a man in whom they could place an absolute trust, a man who had already had some measure of experience and responsibility in the war, and a man who would have the drive and determination to exert as much pressure as possible on the enemy. Gianfrancesco qualified eminently on all these counts and, furthermore, the Venetians had every reason to hope for a lengthy period of continued service from him.

Although Carmagnola had scored some notable successes over the Milanese, an opponent like Filippo Maria Visconti would allow no room for complacency. In the latter stages of Carmagnola's rather low-key direction of the war, the Milanese had begun to make a comeback and the Venetians could simply not afford to allow them to capitalise upon the inevitable weakness which would obviously result from an interregnum of military command.

As we have seen from the previous chapter, Gianfrancesco was alarmingly aware of the threats posed by a possible Milanese resurgence, and the way in which this could affect his relationship with Venice could have played a significant part in the ultimate decision to dispose of Carmagnola.

Given all these reasons the Venetian Senate could hardly be blamed for gambling upon Gianfrancesco's acceptance of their offer; apart from anything else it could be argued very forcefully that at least at this stage in the development of the war, *his* interests were more immediately threatened than theirs. <sup>3/</sup>

The Venetians, however, could never have foretold the surprising difficulty they were to experience in getting Gianfrancesco to take on the responsibilities of supreme command. In examining the whole issue it can be seen that the situation confronting Gianfrancesco was a great deal more complex than the Venetians had imagined.

Much of 1432 was taken up with negotiations over the Captain Generalship as well as continuing the war with Milan. It must be emphasised at the outset that there was no incompatibility between these two things. The issue essentially was not whether or not Gianfrancesco was going to continue in their service, but in what capacity. Although Gianfrancesco never wavered in his fidelity to Venice, this was not good enough. The Venetians had committed themselves to crossing the Adda and there could be no ambiguity as to Gianfrancesco's position in their eyes.



In April 1432 there were many pressures on Gianfrancesco. As well as the tensions resulting from the traumatic experience of Carmagnola's execution, the whole question of military command must be set against the background of two other important issues. For personal reasons there was an immediate need to alleviate pressures on the Mantovano which had resulted from the Milanese successes earlier in the year and this, at least, would guarantee some military action by Gianfrancesco. In addition to this he was more anxious than ever to bring negotiations with Sigismund to a successful conclusion over the question of the Imperial title, a matter which had become something of an obsession with Gianfrancesco. As we have seen, the Venetians were to continue to press very hard for this on his behalf through their ambassador Marco Dandolo. These two issues were very much more closely connected than has previously been acknowledged and had a very important bearing on the whole question of military command. It must be remembered that Filippo Maria had as much interest in what Gianfrancesco would do as the Venetians, and there is a certain amount of evidence which would lead us to believe that he was actively engaged in trying to prevent Gianfrancesco from being appointed by Venice.

The Venetians moved very swiftly after Carmagnola's arrest on 7 April. Although they had made temporary arrangements for the governing of the army it is clear that they hoped Gianfrancesco to succeed to command within a matter of days. On 8 April the Senate decided to appoint Leonardo Mocenigo, Antonio Contarini and Giorgio Cornaro to negotiate with Gianfrancesco over the Generalship and it seems clear from their instructions that they were allowed a certain degree of latitude concerning Gianfrancesco's own personal wishes. At such a delicate stage it was necessary for the Venetians to tread as warily as possible. 4/

On the same day they also reminded Gianfrancesco of the continuing efforts to reach a reasonable financial settlement with Sigismund over the Marquisate. It seems that Sigismund was still insisting on the 12,000 ducats but the Venetians hoped that they would be able to reduce this to eight or even seven thousand. <sup>5/</sup> This tends to confirm the fact that even in Venetian eyes the Imperial title could be used as an inducement to persuade Gianfrancesco to accept.

As far as Venice was concerned things seemed to be going so well that the formal offer of the Captain Generalship was made to him on 10 April, long before Carmagnola's trial and execution. While it seems to be the case that Gianfrancesco had been a little more reticent in his attitude than they had otherwise expected, <sup>6/</sup> and they consequently had to proceed very carefully indeed, <sup>7/</sup> they nevertheless had every confidence that their three envoys had performed their task successfully.

In a sense it was incumbent on the Senate to force Gianfrancesco into the open about this appointment as quickly as possible and this tended to make a direct refusal by Gianfrancesco all the more difficult. It was quite a surprise to the Venetians that for the time being Gianfrancesco declined to accept their offer, excusing himself on account of ill-health. <sup>8/</sup> However, he did offer to go to Brescia at the earliest opportunity and do everything in his power to continue the war until a successor for Carmagnola could be found. He did, however, make it clear that he did not want to remain in Brescia for any longer than was necessary. <sup>9/</sup>

The illness was a somewhat lame excuse in the circumstances. There is no documentary evidence relating to any serious ailment and it

did not prevent him from going to Brescia and pursuing, as it turned out, quite an energetic campaign. It is clear that Gianfrancesco realised the implications of declining this appointment and this was why he was so anxious to display his continuing loyalty to Venice by agreeing to go to Brescia and, moreover, by offering his son Ludovico for military service. <sup>10/</sup>

In the circumstances Gianfrancesco's reply was the most diplomatic he could offer and it is clear that the Venetians were not at all convinced that his decision was final. Although they were prepared for the time being not to press him unduly on this because of his offer to take over on a temporary basis, they were not going to wait too long before pressing him once again.

It is, furthermore, important to note that Gianfrancesco had agreed to serve in Brescia without any official payment. <sup>11/</sup> Consequently the situation which existed between him and Venice was a very vague one. It was precisely this that the Venetians were not fond of and it was in order to rectify this that they chose to opt for a policy of gradual, but persistent, persuasion; but it was used only after Gianfrancesco had gone to Brescia. Hence, in their instructions to Marco Dandolo and Giorgio Cornaro, they stipulated that Gianfrancesco was to have the same powers and was to be treated as though he was Captain General, possibly in the hope that familiarity would breed acceptance rather than contempt. <sup>12/</sup> Their main worry now was to make sure that there would be no trouble from Carmagnola's men in the light of the way in which their master had been treated. <sup>13/</sup> Such delicate matters might well be solved more readily if Gianfrancesco were there. Because he had been closely associated with Carmagnola they considered that he might be more readily accepted.

On the surface this sequence of events would appear to be most uncharacteristic of Gianfrancesco. Why would he not accept the prestigious position which Venice offered him, a post which seemed to be the logical culmination of all he had done in the first phase of the war, rather than a caretaker's job in Brescia in which he had severely circumscribed his level of commitment? This is an extremely difficult question to answer, but it is essential to pose a possible solution to this problem because it could throw invaluable light upon the importance which it was Gianfrancesco's duty to attach to the balancing out of his obligations to Venice with his responsibilities to Mantua.

It had already been observed that Gianfrancesco's active part in the latter stages of Carmagnola's campaigns was minimal. In fact, it would be a fair assessment to conclude that he had been at his most active when Venetian military policy coincided with Mantuan security. This was partly why, in April 1432, he was prepared to go to Brescia at a time when the Milanese threatened the Mantovano and the fact that the position was a temporary one would leave him with the sort of flexibility which he needed. There seems to be no doubt that Gianfrancesco was capable of permanent command, but the direction of Venetian military policy could leave him in a situation where he was going to have a commitment which would lead him progressively further away from the Mantovano. At that time it did not seem practical for Gianfrancesco to assume command, quite apart from the reservations which may have been induced in him by Carmagnola's fate.

This, however, was only one side of the situation. Gianfrancesco could not only concern himself with Venice's reactions, he also had to consider Milan and Sigismund and the effect which his acceptance was likely to have on them. In April both Sigismund and Filippo Maria were intimately concerned with what Gianfrancesco might do and the former's opinions could have a very important role to play in Gianfrancesco's decisions. On 14 April Sigismund wrote to Gianfrancesco from Parma that he had heard of the Venetian offer and he strongly impressed upon him that to accept was against his wishes. He called the Venetians 'hostes nostri' who had always been anti-Imperialist in sentiment and concluded that he hoped that Gianfrancesco would be as faithful a servant of the Imperial cause as his father had been. <sup>14/</sup> In pursuance of this Sigismund sent his secretary Herman Hecht to consult with Gianfrancesco personally. <sup>15/</sup>

Sigismund had been in close communication with Filippo Maria over this and it seemed, judging from what correspondence survives in the Visconti Archive, that they were working very closely together. Through his ambassador Corrado de Carreto the Duke was constantly encouraging Sigismund to persevere in this approach. <sup>16/</sup> Filippo Maria, anxious to press home his advantage over the hiatus in Venice's military command, had everything to gain and nothing to lose by pursuing such a policy. <sup>17/</sup> In fact, in a letter to Sigismund written on 29 April, Filippo Maria enumerated Gianfrancesco's good qualities and suggested to him that he should actively try to separate him from the Venetians by offering him the appointment of Imperial Captain General in Italy as well as investing him with the title of Marquis for the lands he already possessed. <sup>18/</sup> In fact, he seems to have been fully informed about the state of negotiations between Sigismund and Gianfrancesco over the title. <sup>19/</sup>

This correspondence now places the whole situation in a different light. The wily Duke, anxious to bolster up his friendship with Sigismund and serve his own interests at the same time was virtually suggesting, by playing on the bad relations between Venice and Sigismund, that the Imperial title was, at the very least, to be made conditional upon Gianfrancesco not accepting Venetian command, and, if possible, trying to seek revenge for his loss of Carmagnola by inducing Gianfrancesco to leave Venetian service altogether. It was this added complication which tended to put an unbearable pressure upon Gianfrancesco on top of all his other misgivings. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that he was reluctant to accept the Senate's offer.

Filippo Maria's actions here are very similar to his previous attempts to woo Carmagnola away from Venetian service and it could be argued that there was also a secondary intention to discredit Gianfrancesco deliberately in the eyes of the Senate. <sup>20/</sup> However, whether or not this was Filippo Maria's intention, Gianfrancesco felt not only that his chances of successfully negotiating with Sigismund might be lessened, he was also anxious not to compromise his position unduly with Venice.

By the end of April Gianfrancesco was under a great deal of pressure from both sides, but it was very much to his credit that he appraised Venice of Sigismund's intentions. Clearly, at this time Gianfrancesco could not afford to run the risk of being accused of any clandestine relations with the enemy. By 23 April Gianfrancesco had asked Venice to intervene with Sigismund over the negotiations because once again he was making more difficulties over the amount of money to be paid. <sup>21/</sup> It is interesting and significant to note that the Senate voted unanimously in favour of this and on 26 April they sent instructions

to their ambassador in Florence, Ermolao Donato, to set this in motion. <sup>22/</sup>  
 There was thus quite a powerful reason for Venice to take up negotiations with Sigismund.

In fact, this very issue may well have played an important part in Venice's desire for a rapprochement with Sigismund in more general terms. From a diplomatic point of view one of the most interesting trends of 1432 and the beginning of 1433 is the way in which Sigismund left Milan for Venice, and this was closely bound up with Gianfrancesco's fortunes. In fact, even before April Sigismund's relations with Filippo Maria had not been of the best. The Duke had always placed an inordinate amount of confidence in Sigismund's friendship, despite the fact that the impecunious King of the Romans had never really lived up to expectations and there had been many disagreements over men and money. <sup>23/</sup>

At the beginning of 1432 Filippo Maria was genuinely alarmed at losing Sigismund's friendship and, given the latter's overriding desire to be crowned Emperor by the Pope, who happened to be the Venetian Eugenius IV at this time, it is hardly surprising that Filippo Maria was trying to dissuade him from going to Rome and was encouraging him instead to go to Basle to negotiate with the Council. Sigismund, however, ignored Filippo Maria's advice, and it became clear to him by the beginning of 1432 that even though he and the Venetians were enemies his interests would be much better served if he were to cultivate their friendship. It was the beginning of a long and gradual process which was not to be complete until the following year and was seen in one of its most tangible forms in the formal ceremony of Gianfrancesco's investiture as Marquis at the end of September 1433. The process began at the end of April 1432 and coincided almost exactly with Gianfrancesco's request for Venice to help. In a

letter to the Cardinal of Santa Croce dated 30 April 1432 Gianfrancesco tells him of the Venetian approaches to Sigismund for a league. <sup>24/</sup>  
 In the same letter he also alludes to *pluribus legittimis causis que longum est narrare* why he was unable to accept the Captain Generalship, but adds that he is nevertheless very anxious to demonstrate his sincere affection towards Venice.

It was a great source of relief to him that there may be less incompatibility between the interests of Venice and Sigismund, but this did not lead Gianfrancesco to be over optimistic about the way in which matters would eventually turn out. It was virtually impossible to estimate which direction Filippo Maria's policy would take and consequently it paid him to continue adopting a cautious attitude.

As far as Sigismund was concerned, he was in a rather favourable diplomatic position for the time being with both Milan and Venice vying with each other for his friendship. The one thing they had in common, though for different reasons, was that they supported Gianfrancesco's investiture. In the circumstances the grant of an Imperial title was sufficiently ambiguous not to jeopardise Sigismund's position; in fact, it would tend to raise his credit in the eyes of Eugenius IV as well.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the negotiations over this came to a swift conclusion. On 6 May 1432 at Parma the formal grant of a Marquisate was made to Gianfrancesco. It is significant to note that the final fee was 12,000 ducats; Sigismund characteristically seemed to be much less flexible over the question of hard cash. It is also important that the definition of the territorial limits of his Marquisate



did not conflict with Filippo Maria's interests. They were defined as "Sermide, Revero, Quistello, Luzzara, Suzzara et Marcha regio cum omnibus earum turris, villis et pertinentibus ac cum fluminis Situle, Oleii, Padi et Mincii cum omnibus suis ultra citraque Ripis, castris, fortificiis et locis". <sup>25/</sup> He was also given the faculty of coining money and quartering his coat of arms with the Imperial eagles. On the following day Sigismund sent Hecht with a copy of this document for Gianfrancesco's approval. All this was done with the explicit approval of Venice because on the very day that the grant was made Foscari wrote to Gianfrancesco congratulating him on the successful conclusion of the negotiations. <sup>26/</sup> On 7 May Gianfrancesco signed a formal oath of loyalty to Sigismund <sup>27/</sup> and in return was granted the "facultatem relinquendi cuilibet ex duobus aliis filiis suis legitimis usque ad numerum castrorum 4 de castris Marchionatus Mantue, cum hoc tamen quod prelibati duo filii teneatur illa recognoscere per investituram a primogenito, et confirmantis eidem marchioni iurisdictiones infrascriptorum castrorum". <sup>28/</sup> These negotiations were concluded by 14 May and at this point the matter rested for the time being. <sup>29/</sup>

There was a considerable gap between the drawing up of the various papers connected with the Imperial title and the actual ceremony of investiture which took place more than a year later, on 22 September 1433. There were some very good diplomatic reasons for this, which will be discussed at greater length below. For obvious reasons a ceremony of this sort would not be in Sigismund's interests at a time when his diplomatic situation was so ambiguous. Sigismund was probably more aware than most princes of the subtle but crucial distinction between the formal grant of a title on paper and the actual ceremony of investiture. This

was evidently also realised by Gianfrancesco and tended to reinforce his natural caution over the question of the Venetian command. Both these problems were only to be finally solved when there was no longer any ambiguity in Sigismund's position; that is, when his political alignment became much more definitely pro-Venetian. This alignment would obviously be affected by the progress of the conflict between Venice and Milan.

The Venetians, for their part, were pleased at the outcome of this affair because by May they were most anxious for Gianfrancesco to resume military operations if only to display to Milan that the Carmagnola episode had not thrown them off their stride.

By the end of April Gianfrancesco had taken charge of affairs in Brescia, and despite his reluctance, soon displayed those powers of organisation which had been shown to such great effect in the first phase of the war. <sup>30/</sup> He was to work harmoniously with Giorgio Cornaro in reorganising the Venetian forces in preparation for the campaign, which had not made any significant progress since Carmagnola's recall.

According to Sanuto, the military strength at Gianfrancesco's disposal consisted of 9,600 cavalry, 8,000 infantry, 6,000 'cernide' "e infiniti partigiani". <sup>31/</sup> The official estimate sent by Gianfrancesco to the Senate stated 10,000 cavalry and 6,000 infantry. <sup>32/</sup> In fact, judging from this first extant report he made to the Senate, Gianfrancesco does not appear to have been very satisfied either with the number of men or the arrangements over supplies and munitions. This complaint was to be made time and time again to the Senate when the war re-started in 1437.

However, on this occasion they were very anxious indeed that operations should get under way by the end of the month at the very latest. The Senate replied to him that they feared that things would get worse if there were any further delay, and they promised their best to satisfy Gianfrancesco's demands over men and supplies, not only for the army itself, but also to protect the areas they still held which were threatened by the Milanese. Furthermore, they despatched a sum of 20,000 ducats for immediate expenses. <sup>33/</sup> In short, even though the Venetians were experiencing some difficulty as far as men and money were concerned, they were very conscious of the need to be as accommodating to Gianfrancesco in giving him as much help as possible given the nature of his position in Brescia. <sup>34/</sup> At the same time Venice was still continuing active discussions with Sigismund and Eugenius IV and Montferrat in order to isolate Milan still further. <sup>35/</sup>

Initially the Venetian plan was to cross the Oglio and recover some of the crossing places which had been occupied by Piccinino, but ultimately Venetian aims of crossing the Adda had not changed.

Although the organisation of troops and supplies took the better part of a month to accomplish, the Senate was beginning to get impatient by June. They were very concerned lest Piccinino's forces would get so entrenched that they would become very difficult to move. Their long-term plans for the campaigning season were quite ambitious - they wanted to reach the Adda and consequently a quick thrust across the Oglio was essential.

Suddenly, at the end of May, Gianfrancesco wrote to the Senate complaining of ill-health. He reported that he was not well enough to serve them as he would wish to, but nevertheless, conscious of the difficulties which this might create, he would try his best to stay on at least until the end of the month. <sup>36/</sup> At the very time that operations were due to commence, this request was a grievous blow to the Senate. At first it was rejected outright by a majority of 34, but on further discussion with the 'sapientiae terrarum' the Senate replied that they were prepared to allow him leave of absence at the end of June. <sup>37/</sup>

This sudden cloud overhanging the campaign brought home once again the drawbacks of Gianfrancesco's vague status as 'locumtenens'. However we interpret this illness; whether it was as bad as Gianfrancesco claimed it to be, or whether it was a last minute reticence on his part in committing himself to long-term operations, it certainly provoked a renewed discussion in the Senate over the whole question of the military command.

On 7 June the Senate wrote to the authorities in Brescia voicing their extreme concern at what was to be done in Gianfrancesco's absence. They confessed that they had been unable to reach any satisfactory conclusion over this. They were worried about Gianfrancesco's continual refusals to take overall command, but could not think of anyone more suitable than he to carry out the task. They once more asked the authorities to try and gently persuade him to take this on, reminding him of his past successes in their service. However, they also asked them in confidence whether they had any suggestions as to who could succeed him. <sup>38/</sup> It appeared that Sanseverino was very high on the list as a possible candidate <sup>39/</sup> although this was to be very much as a last resort after

exhaustive attempts "circa suum (Gianfrancesco) remanere et persequi ad gubernationem nostrorum gentium". <sup>40/</sup> Naturally such a contingency plan was to remain strictly secret.

Anyhow, while these discussions were proceeding behind the scenes, military operations to cross the Oglio had begun in order to drive the enemy back towards the Adda. Although the details of the campaign itself need not concern us here, its outcome was bound to have a significant effect upon Gianfrancesco's standing with the Venetians.

In general the operations of the period from June to August were successful. In the first instance it was Gianfrancesco's task to take the war directly into the Cremasco and Cremonese and he took the nearest crossing point over the Oglio which was roughly equidistant between the two, Bordolano. Once this had been captured and reinforced it could be used as a base for supplies and also as a basis for capturing the surrounding area. <sup>41/</sup> The operations of this month were particularly successful. After the securing of Bordolano, Casalbuttano, Soresina and other small areas around Crema were captured. Piccinino seemed quite unable to contain this advance and it appeared very likely that the Venetians would consolidate their position by pushing northwards towards Romanengo and Soncino before proceeding to the Adda.

In fact the Venetians were so delighted with Gianfrancesco's efforts that as early as 14 June they were consulting both him and Giorgio Cornaro as to the feasibility of reaching, and perhaps crossing the Adda before the present campaigning season was over; "Cum ibi consistat victoria nostra et excidium hostis nostri et status sui". <sup>42/</sup> The campaign in the

Cremonese was only to be a prelude to a major onslaught into the Milanese itself. In the same letter Gianfrancesco was assured of constant supplies, men and money, even though they admitted that it was frequently difficult to satisfy all his requests. <sup>43/</sup> While it was one of Gianfrancesco's tasks not to alienate the local population by pillaging the countryside the Senate clearly intended to hit the enemy as hard as possible. <sup>44/</sup> Gianfrancesco's initial success made his impending absence at the end of the month a matter of even more immediate concern, especially as the army was about to move northwards at the beginning of July. It now became an important objective to persuade Gianfrancesco to stay on at least until this phase of the campaign was completed, even though there was still active discussion in the Senate about arrangements during Gianfrancesco's absence. It was even suggested at one point that temporary command should rotate between Guidantonio Manfredi, Sanseverino and Pietrogianpaolo Orsini. <sup>45/</sup>

At the beginning of July there was a concerted effort to persuade Gianfrancesco to stay on. Letters were sent praising his leadership, his harmonious relationship with the provveditori and his prestige not only in the Venetian army, but also how his presence struck fear into the hearts of the enemy. <sup>46/</sup> If only he would condescend to stay on a little longer his achievement would bring him and his state perpetual fame and they would moreover guarantee him proper and efficient financial support. In addition to this Sante Venier and Giorgio Cornaro were furnished with specific instructions to back up this approach.

The question of permanent command is not at all raised here. It is fairly clear that the Venetians were not at all pleased with the

alternative they had been discussing, certainly not while the campaign was in such a delicate initial stage.

All this was even more pressing because there is evidence to prove that at this time Gianfrancesco was not actually with the army. However, it is evident from subsequent letters to Venier and Cornaro that Gianfrancesco was by no means easy to persuade, and by the end of July, when the Venetian army was ready to make a decisive move towards Romanengo and Soncino, the matter became so urgent that Ambrogio Badoer, Gianfrancesco's old fiend, was sent to negotiate with him. In fact, Badoer's mission was to continue into August and his successful record caused him to be used on a number of subsequent occasions when all else seemed to have failed.

The pressures on Gianfrancesco were so great that by 16 July he promised to help at least until Romanengo fell, <sup>47/</sup> much to the relief of the Senate, which was no quietly confident of being able to persuade him to stay on even longer "*cognoscentes praesentiam sue esse utilem et necessaria in agendis nostri exercitui*". <sup>48/</sup> Even so, even after the siege of Soncino had started on 4 August Badoer was still trying to persuade Gianfrancesco to join the army; he was even instructed to offer him a share of the spoils. <sup>49/</sup> However, it seemed very unlikely that the Venetians would get his active service even by the end of the month, in fact, all that Gianfrancesco seemed to do was to give them rather vague promises.

The campaign to capture Soncino was to be a long and drawn out affair, lasting almost the whole of the month of August. This is why the

Venetians were so insistent in their efforts to get Gianfrancesco to supervise this personally. They felt he might well be able to quicken things up. The campaigning season was drawing on and they did not seem to be anywhere near their objective.

Meanwhile Filippo Maria was beginning to despair of ever having any effective help from Sigismund. On 4 August he wrote him a desperate letter informing him of the progress made by the enemy, how they had taken all the areas mentioned above, together with Paderno Cremonese, la Capella and Fontanella "quarum perditio est maximi detrimenti rebus meis".<sup>50/</sup> He complained that his forces had not been strong enough to resist<sup>51/</sup> and that the Venetian army was better prepared than his. Sigismund had promised to send Hungarian troops into Friuli and Filippo Maria was trying to get him to take action as quickly as possible seeing that the Venetians were without an effective commander owing to Gianfrancesco's absence from the army.<sup>52/</sup> This is yet another reference to how important the Duke judged Gianfrancesco's contribution to the Venetian war effort to be.

Filippo Maria, clutching at straws, seemed incapable of realising how his Imperial ally was playing him false, and on 24 August, with the fall of Soncino imminent, he renewed his appeal for help.<sup>53/</sup> He was quite right in fearing that the fall of Soncino would signal a Venetian thrust towards the Adda and into the Ghiaradadda.<sup>54/</sup> On 27 August Soncino surrendered<sup>55/</sup> and the Venetians felt that they had Filippo Maria where they wanted him.

Gianfrancesco's continued absence must have been very frustrating indeed to the Venetians, and although a campaign was launched into the



Ghiaradadda, the Valtelline and Valcamonica under the direction of Giorgio Cornaro<sup>56/</sup> very little was done to follow up the fall of Soncino by an advance westwards.

On 9 September the Senate wrote to Sante Venier and Andrea Giuliano complaining that little progress had been made and that the army was to be kept in the field as long as possible.<sup>57/</sup> However, it soon became obvious that no real progress could be made during the present campaigning season and the thrust towards the Adda eventually became a mere 'holding' campaign. By the end of September arrangements were already in hand for the men to be lodged in winter quarters, if not beyond the Oglio, at least as close to the frontiers as possible.

A campaign which had started off in a very promising fashion had ended rather disappointingly. Even though by November the Venetian position immediately across the Oglio was very strong Milanese resistance had begun to strengthen. However, Filippo Maria, bereft of Imperial aid and very short of money, was anxious to reopen peace negotiations through the mediation of Gianfrancesco.

In fact, negotiations were well under way by November and the Venetians sent Fantino Michiel as their principal negotiator. Palla Strozzi was sent by Florence and, if we are to believe Sanuto, Gianfrancesco himself was also present at Ferrara at this time.<sup>58/</sup>

On the surface it would seem rather curious that Gianfrancesco who had played no part in the major Venetian campaigns should have been present at the time. However, the correspondence with Venice would indicate a very good reason for this.

In surveying the achievements of 1432 the Senate could only conclude that the failure in the long term had been almost entirely due to lack of stable military leadership. In particular, events in the Valtelline in November made it even more pressing for a definite move to be made on this front. The Milanese capture of Giorgio Cornaro must have been exceedingly galling for the Venetians.<sup>59/</sup> Consequently, in November new and more energetic approaches were made to Gianfrancesco to persuade him to accept the Captain Generalship.

By 13 November the negotiations in Ferrara were going through a difficult phase. Filippo Maria was proving particularly intransigent over the Valcamonica and Ghiaradadda, and the prospect of a renewal of the war induced the Senate to send Ermolao Donato and Badoer to Mantua to press Gianfrancesco to accept.<sup>60/</sup>

These efforts, in stark contrast to their previous attempts, were remarkably successful. A mere eleven days later, on 24 November 1432, Donato and Badoer were able to report back to the Senate that Gianfrancesco had been content to accept the appointment as Captain General of the Venetian forces "cum provisione ducati 1,000 auri in ms. et ratione mensis, et cum conducta lancearum quingentarum computata conducta Ludovici."<sup>61/</sup> The formalities were gone through very quickly and Badoer was instructed to give Gianfrancesco every assurance of protection from Venice as well as their absolute trust in him.

According to Sanuto the ceremony of formal investiture took place in Venice on 28 November,<sup>62/</sup> and preparations were made for his removal to Brescia at the earliest opportunity. Belpetro Manelmi was despatched as 'colaterale' and Badoer was also required to accompany him to Brescia and to keep the Senate informed of daily developments.<sup>63/</sup>

On 3 December Badoer was instructed to discuss with Gianfrancesco any issues arising out of his new appointment, but in general there seemed to be no major problems as far as his office was concerned. In return for his undertaking to accept office "in perminentiam" the Senate agreed to a personal condotta of 600 lances (including Ludovico), 200 'lancie spezzate' and 300 infantry with the promise of an increase in numbers in the following year. Initially his 'ferma' was to be for one year and six months 'di rispetto'. In addition to this the Venetians undertook to include him in any agreement made with Sigismund. This last point was a significant inclusion. <sup>64/</sup>

The only problem which arose over these negotiations was over the territories which Gianfrancesco wanted as a reward for his services. In particular he was interested in getting possession of Parma. This had been raised with Badoer on 8 December and the Senate quickly replied to him that this was impossible because, as part of the agreement with Florence, Parma had been promised to Niccolò d'Este. The Venetians promised Gianfrancesco Cremona instead, provided it was captured from the Visconti. <sup>65/</sup> Badoer was asked to request Gianfrancesco's personal attendance at Venice should any further difficulties arise over this "pro celeri conclusione et expeditione istarum rerum". It was clearly in Venice's interests to clear up any misunderstanding with the least amount of fuss. This should not be allowed to jeopardise their position with Eugenius IV over this area. <sup>66/</sup> In fact, even by the end of the month matters had not been effectively resolved and it was consequently necessary for Gianfrancesco to go personally to Venice.

He proved to be very obstinate over this matter and at one point the Venetians even had to consult a number of eminent Paduan lawyers and

get them to explain the legal intricacies of their position to him. <sup>67/</sup>  
 In fact, the Venetians had to work very hard to dissuade Gianfrancesco and a final settlement was not reached until 19 January 1433. By it he agreed to content himself with the lands of Guastalla, Mirandola, Crema and its surrounding area, Caravaggio, Treviglio, Ripalta, Vailate and Brignano 'si acquirentur'. <sup>68/</sup> The formal documents regarding these lands were drawn up on 13 March. <sup>69/</sup> Even though the negotiations over this last problem had been rather fraught, the Venetians could now rest a little more easily in that one of their most pressing military problems had been solved.

However, it is very important to investigate more fully at this point Gianfrancesco's change of heart over the matter of the Venetian command as well as trying to explain why it was that he made such difficulties over the territorial part of the agreement.

It is true that one of Gianfrancesco's motives for hesitating to accept Venice's offer during the campaigning season was that the area across the Oglio, Ghiaradadda and the Valtellina did not immediately concern him. After all, this was only part of the area which had been occupied by the Milanese. The area east of Cremona around Casalmaggiore interested Gianfrancesco much more closely because it was the area which could threaten the Serraglio. For the time being Venetian priorities did not include this area really and it may well be that Gianfrancesco felt it his duty to devote his energies to protecting the southern part of the Mantovano during this period. In fact, on 11 July 1432 Niccolò d'Este hinted in a letter to Gianfrancesco that he had heard that Filippo Maria wanted to send an army to Casalmaggiore and warned him to be on his guard. <sup>70/</sup>

In fact, there were subsidiary operations conducted around Brescello and Casalmaggiore during the latter part of 1432 and Gianfrancesco was very concerned about security in this area. In October 1432 both Gianfrancesco and Ludovico were active in fortifying this area and were trying to restrict the movements of the enemy here.<sup>71/</sup> The Venetians were not able to offer him much practical help but they did point out the importance of cooperation with Este over this. Clearly in such circumstances the defence of his own territories had to come first.

However, there were other motives which affected his actions as well. In particular Gianfrancesco was watching the movements of Sigismund very closely. Although he was gravitating increasingly towards Venice, Gianfrancesco needed concrete proof of how he stood. Sigismund's unwillingness to help Filippo Maria during the summer of 1432 must have been gratifying to him, especially as he had still to be formally invested with the Marquisate. However, there was more to it even than that. As early as July 1432 there were negotiations under way between Gianfrancesco and Sigismund over the possibility of a prestigious marriage between Ludovico and Barbara, the daughter of the Elector of Brandenburg, an occurrence which, if successful, could have enhanced Mantuan prestige immeasurably. Simone da Crema had been Gianfrancesco's ambassador, a man of considerable experience in dealing with such people, having been present at the Council of Basle. In a letter dated 8 July 1432 Herman Hecht wrote to Gianfrancesco informing him that there had already been much discussion over the match and that Sigismund was inclined to give it his firm backing.<sup>72/</sup> Consequently, Gianfrancesco could ill afford not to stand well with him at this stage. This may well have been a very powerful reason for his holding back until he could see more clearly in which direction relations between Venice and

Sigismund were moving. This was the reason why, in the final agreement with Venice, there was a very firm stipulation that Gianfrancesco's Imperial interests should be protected. <sup>73/</sup>

Indeed, by the very end of 1432 it seemed once again that Venice would not only help protect him, but would also be very necessary to fulfil his dynastic ambitions. By this time he had realised not only that there was no need to continue adopting this ambiguous position, but that it could be positively detrimental to his own interests. The proximity of the Milanese around Casalmaggiore frightened him; perhaps as Captain General he might be in a position of greater strength to protect himself. This was why there was a definite undertaking by Venice to protect all Mantuan territories in the agreement. <sup>74/</sup> Furthermore, the fact that Gianfrancesco accepted at a time when active peace negotiations were proceeding perhaps tended to suggest that in real terms the burden of military responsibility for operations might not last long while at the same time making the Senate even more eager, in their gratitude, to help him.

This is yet another instance of Gianfrancesco having to balance the interests of his state against those of Venice; and this is also the reason for the controversy over Parma. Traditionally one of the weakest parts of Mantuan defences was the border facing Parma and possession of that city would strengthen his position immeasurably. This was why he put up a fight to get it. His failure was a great disappointment to him. The alternative areas he was offered by Venice were very much a second best. Gianfrancesco was forced to accept them in the end because he could not afford to compromise the larger benefits which Venice could furnish him with, but their position, far away from the Mantovano, did not make their

possession an attractive possibility in the long run though, as far as Venice was concerned, they were intended to serve as a bait to lure Gianfrancesco towards the Adda. These lands clearly contained the seeds of future trouble.

We have given a great deal of attention to these months because they serve to reinforce a very important point about Gianfrancesco's motives. The period has served to illustrate once again that the reasoning which governed his actions is a great deal more complex and involved than one might think initially. The fact that he became Captain General of Venice only after a great deal of deliberation does not indicate any sense of ingratitude towards the Senate, but it demonstrates the very difficult dilemma which often confronted the ruler of a small state which was unwittingly caught up in power politics. There were very cogent reasons for Gianfrancesco being a reluctant commander.

Whatever reservations Gianfrancesco may have had about accepting the Captain Generalship, it was at least very beneficial to the Venetians at a time when the negotiations at Ferrara were beginning to drag. As in the previous peace, this agreement, eventually reached in April 1433, was a very complex business. There is no need to go into the discussions here<sup>75/</sup> but, in general, the impasse was the result of differences over boundaries, and even before it was signed, it became very evident that it could be none other than a temporary stopgap. The territories over which controversy raged were the Valcamonica, Ghiaradadda, regarded as the "chiave della stessa Milano", and the Milanese wish to keep its boundaries at the Oglio.

However, it is important to realise that there was no real suspension of hostilities while these negotiations were proceeding, and the

fact that the Venetians now had someone in overall charge of military operations led them to hope that they would be able to negotiate from a position of greater strength.

Even so, not much had been accomplished by the time the peace was signed. Gianfrancesco did go to Brescia on 18 December 1432 to try to salvage the rather difficult situation in the Valcamonica and, under the able direction of Sanseverino, some progress was made in recapturing territory from the Milanese. It was, however, very difficult work. <sup>76/</sup> There is evidence of Gianfrancesco spending two further periods of residence in Brescia in January and March 1433, and in his 'refirma' with Venice of 12 March he was awarded an official house in the city. <sup>77/</sup>

The campaigns in February and March were relatively minor ones in the Bergamasco, capturing small castles. This was under the direction of Sanseverino although the overall supervision was Gianfrancesco's. <sup>78/</sup> It seemed that lack of funds played an important part in dictating the smaller scale of operations.

Although this was frustrating for the Venetians, they were always thinking in terms of stepping up operations as the peace negotiations were reaching their conclusion. On 2 April the Senate instructed the Captain of Brescia Geronimo Contarini to liaise with Gianfrancesco about the possibility of a push towards the Adda by the end of the month because their intelligence had indicated that the area would be relatively undefended owing to larger concentrations of Milanese troops in Genoa. <sup>79/</sup> There were plans for a mobilisation of all troops in the Bresciano with the promise of reinforcements and additional 'guastatori' from Venice.



This may well have been a last effort to use force in order to change the somewhat unfavourable direction in which the negotiations at Ferrara were moving; but nothing came of it because the final details of this uneasy compromise, reached on 26 April, involved substantial concessions by Venice which virtually amounted to giving up all the lands which had been conquered between the Adda and the Oglio.<sup>80/</sup> It was not surprising that Filippo Maria ordered festivities to celebrate a peace which was so substantially favourable to him.<sup>81/</sup> Although this could be no real solution to the problem it did usher in an albeit uneasy and fragile peace in Lombardy until 1437.

As far as Filippo Maria was concerned the Venetian advance had been checked for the time being, but the second Peace of Ferrara indicated that it was now Venice, rather than Milan, which was beginning to be regarded as the dangerous power in Northern Italy. It was evident, judging from the documentary evidence, that the Senate would not rest until its western boundary had reached the Adda at the very least, and this was made very pointedly in the lands which had been promised to Gianfrancesco.

Gianfrancesco's reactions to the peace are not recorded, although he was kept very closely informed about the state of negotiations by Este. However, it is logical to assume that he was greatly relieved. We have seen how reluctantly he accepted command and, granted that one of his motives for reluctance was the incompatibility of Venetian war aims with Mantua's interests, it was much less difficult to be Captain General in time of peace than in time of war. Although, as we shall see in the next section of the chapter, there was still quite a lot for him to do, the period after the Peace was a welcome breathing space for him.

Furthermore, there was another reason why the Peace of Ferrara was favourable to Gianfrancesco. It signalled the beginning of a much stronger gravitation by Sigismund towards Venice and such a situation could only serve to make his formal investiture with the Marquisate a much more immediate proposition.

Negotiations between Venice and Sigismund became even more active after the Peace and by this time he had openly broken off relations with Filippo Maria. <sup>82/</sup> In short, Venice proposed a truce of five years to Sigismund which also included substantial financial concessions which were bound to carry great weight. <sup>83/</sup>

Having thus settled matters, Sigismund made his long awaited entry into Rome on 21 May 1433. Ten days later he was crowned in a magnificent ceremony in St. Peter's. On 4 June the Venetian truce was published and Sigismund was given a free passage through Venetian territories on his way back to Germany.

The newly crowned Emperor left Rome on 13 August for Basle. He went first of all to Ferrara and then, in September, arrived at Mantua. A Venetian ambassador was to accompany Sigismund while he was in their territory, and part of his instructions, issued on 1 September, involved arrangements for Gianfrancesco's own investiture. <sup>84/</sup>

Sigismund arrived in Mantua on 20 September and stayed for eight days. It was during this period that one of Gianfrancesco's dearest ambitions was finally achieved. <sup>85/</sup>

Amid great festivities the ceremony of investiture took place on 22 September when, according to Amadei, "il Serenissimo Imperadore Sigismundo IV con le soe mane e bocca creò e fece Marchese di Mantova sopra una trionfante tribunale su la Piazza di S.Pietro di Mantova". <sup>86/</sup> Ephemeral though Sigismund's real power in Italy was, this was a prestigious moment for Mantua as well as a personal triumph for Gianfrancesco. Moreover, we can see how closely it was linked to the now open friendship between Sigismund and Venice. It was yet another manifestation of the benefits accruing from a close association between Gianfrancesco and his protector.

It was also during this visit that the final touches were put to the project of Ludovico's marriage to Barbara of Brandenburg, another event which, on the surface at least, was to put Mantua on a par with the princes of Germany. This, however, was only a theoretical status because as it turned out in practice the honour was all Mantua's. It was an honour which, like the Marquisate, also had its price. In fact, negotiations had been proceeding on and off for over a year by this time. On 6 July 1433 the Cardinal of S.Angelo had confirmed in a letter to Gianfrancesco that the actual marriage agreement had been signed by Frederick at Basle on the previous day. <sup>87/</sup> Characteristically, matters were greatly accelerated by Sigismund's rapprochement with Venice. The details of the settlement were quickly agreed upon and the Cardinal, moreover, assured Gianfrancesco that he had received reports that she was a good looking girl. <sup>88/</sup>

The prospect of such an advantageous match for the Gonzaga resulted in a settlement in which the obligations were all on the side of Gianfrancesco. The extant copy of the marriage contract in the Mantuan Archive includes no requirements from the bride. In fact, it explicitly states that Gianfrancesco, on his son's behalf, expressly asked for no

dowry from Barbara. On the contrary it was Gianfrancesco which contracted to pay the sum of 25,000 florins for the honour of a Hohenzollern bride, <sup>89/</sup> in addition to all the expenses incurred by her for her journey to Mantua. <sup>90/</sup>

Because most of the documents relating to the marriage are undated, it is not possible to pinpoint exactly the date of the actual wedding; but it seems likely that it occurred at the end of November. Barbara arrived at Mantua on 21 or 22 November and elaborate preparations had been made for her reception and the wedding celebrations. <sup>91/</sup>

The list of guests was quite impressive. Amongst others were to be representatives from Venice, Florence, Ferrara, Urbino, Ravenna, Faenza and Rimini. The Imperial Ambassador also attended along with Pandolfo, Galeazzo and Carlo Malatesta of Pesaro. <sup>92/</sup> There were no fewer than twenty Venetian noblemen as well as smaller *signori* from Mirandula, Coreggio and Guastalla. It was estimated that there would be some 405 guests in all and this presented considerable accommodation problems which required skilful handling. <sup>93/</sup> Gianfrancesco was very concerned to show Mantua at its best on this auspicious occasion. If we are to believe the Chroniclers, this was certainly the case. For instance, the young bride was welcomed to the city with a sumptuous and colourful ceremony:

"No si potria contar l'honore grande che fu fatto alla sposa nel' intrar dentro da Mantoa. Fra le altre nottabili case fu elletto 20 damigelle vergine, tutte vestite di damasco bianco suso carretti indorate quale andorno contro alla sposa fin alla chiesa delli Angoli aciò che quelle done Angeliche recevescero la sposa Angelicha, le quali dove su carretta el giorno seguente e lo sposo a cavallo acompagnorono detta sposa co' molti Signori, baroni e cavalieri dento da Mantoa. No' fu mai veduto tanti triomphi e nole sontuose". <sup>94/</sup>

The investiture of Gianfrancesco and the marriage of his son are two high points in his career and they certainly did bring added lustre to the Mantuan state as well. However, it would be unwise to overestimate these events in real political terms. They were directly the result of a diplomatic gravitation by the Emperor towards Venice, but Gianfrancesco had to pay a great deal of money for them as well. In real terms the favour of Sigismund did not count for much, it most certainly did not guarantee Mantua protection in the power politics of Lombardy. There may have been a temporary lull in the war, but the problems of constant vigilance and military preparedness were as crucial as ever. It is to these matters that we must now turn.

### III

#### Uneasy Peace in Lombardy (1433-1437)

The period between the second Peace of Ferrara and the end of 1436 was not one of open war on the Lombard front; but although the hostilities were transferred to Tuscany and Romagna, this did not mean that Gianfrancesco was completely inactive. Even though his activities were more low-key during this time, this provides an interesting opportunity to see what was expected of a commander in peace time.

In many ways this period very much resembles the early 1420's. It was a time of continual tension between Venice and Milan in which both sides were seeking the slightest opportunity to take the advantage. This meant that Gianfrancesco was kept reasonably busy ensuring the security of the border areas as well as concerning himself with more purely organisational problems. However, while this took up a considerable amount of his time, it was essential to balance this by keeping himself as fully informed as possible about the diplomatic state of play because of the repercussions

this could have on Mantua's position. This involved not only Milan and Venice, but also Ferrara, the Papacy, Sigismund and Francesco Sforza.

Most of the remaining part of 1433 was concerned with tying up and running down military operations. For instance, at the end of August Gianfrancesco was involved in securing the release of prisoners taken during the campaign in the Valtelline. Many had fought bravely and Venice was most concerned to keep them in its service. <sup>95/</sup>

Even though there was peace there was much mutual recrimination between Milan and Venice and there were continual fears that the Milanese might still try to take advantage of the relatively favourable position which the Peace had created for them. This was why, in its instructions to Gianfrancesco, the Senate urged him to make absolutely sure that the frontier areas were securely fortified. This was certainly the case in September when the Senate was worried at what might happen during Gianfrancesco's absence owing to Sigismund's visit to Mantua. Not only were the castles of the Bresciano and Brescia itself to be provided with a sufficient number of men, <sup>96/</sup> but it was frightened at news of concentrations of Milanese troops in the Cremonese, and consequently ordered Gianfrancesco to make sure that all the crossing points over the Oglio were well guarded. <sup>97/</sup> The Senate was more than satisfied at the way in which he carried this out. In this delicate period immediately after the peace it was essential for the Venetian army to be in such a position as to be able to go into action should any crisis occur.

In June and July the Senate had ordered a check on the numbers of men in Venetian service. The size of the army amounted to 5,000 cavalry, 2,000 infantry, 200 archers and 200 'balestrieri'. <sup>98/</sup> An army of this size was not always easy to manage and in time of peace problems sometimes seemed to get worse. For quite a lot of the time Gianfrancesco was concerned with the sometimes difficult problems of keeping the condottieri happy and also keeping them in Venetian service. The Venetians always realised the advantages of a more permanent military personnel and Gianfrancesco's diplomatic skills in this respect were to be continually tested.

For instance, in September Gianfrancesco reported to the Senate that there were differences of opinion among the captains. They are not specified, but the matter was considered serious enough for the Senate to send some of the 'savi del consiglio' in order to give Gianfrancesco more time for purely military matters. <sup>99/</sup>

Judging from the problems which occurred later in the year it is highly likely that they related to the question of peacetime reductions in numbers. Even while military operations were in progress Venice frequently had considerable difficulty in finding the requisite sums of money and it was clearly impracticable that such a level of expenditure could be continued in time of peace. Consequently, Gianfrancesco was actively engaged on a number of occasions in haggling with his captains over the size of their condotte. The Senate had always shown a great deal of confidence in Gianfrancesco's harmonious relationships with his men. A fairly typical example can be seen in December when he was successful in retaining the services of Sanseverino. <sup>100/</sup> These negotiations were

frequently difficult and not always successful. For instance, in November 1433 Gianfrancesco was actively trying to keep Antonello Petrucci da Siena whom he himself had originally engaged. The Venetians were prepared to offer him a condotta of 40 cavalry<sup>101/</sup> as an inducement, but unfortunately he took active service with Milan once again in 1434.<sup>102/</sup>

Such difficulties do not seem to have been resolved by the end of 1433 and the Senate was worried about these differences of opinion<sup>103/</sup> which constituted what they regarded as a serious weakness in the army. This was why three provveditori were elected to go to Brescia to confer with Gianfrancesco in order to settle the details of the 'firme' and 'refirme' once and for all.<sup>104/</sup>

In addition to trying to resolve their own problems the Venetians were also on the lookout for new men. They were actively engaged in trying to get the services of Gattamelata during this period.<sup>105/</sup> In such matters the Venetians could be very persistent. They displayed it in great measure over negotiations with Francesco Sforza, finally succeeding in the following April.<sup>106/</sup> The Senate also wanted Gianfrancesco to lure as many men away from Milanese service as possible.<sup>107/</sup>

These were fairly typical examples of the organisational problems which Gianfrancesco faced as Captain General; but even in this first year of his tenure of command it can be seen that the Senate never left him to solve these problems on his own. Although there is no documentary evidence to suggest that Gianfrancesco felt that the provveditori were restricting his authority during this period, it can already be seen that the foundations to the disputes similar to those which Carmagnola experienced were being laid.



While up to this point there had been no unduly severe military pressures exerted upon Gianfrancesco in his new office, as Marquis of Mantua he can only have viewed the development of Milanese policy after Ferrara with increasing concern.

Filippo Maria Visconti could never forgive Eugenius IV for having deprived him of Sigismund whom he had considered his closest ally, and this had made him an even more fervant supporter of the Council of Basle. Consequently, there is much to lead us to believe that the Council regarded Filippo Maria as the most important executor of its wishes in Italy.<sup>108/</sup> This provided him with more than ample justification to take his revenge on both Sigismund and the Pope. As early as 27 October 1433 he sent order to his lieutenant Giacomo di Lonato to take under this protection all those lands of the Papal States which were disposed to oppose Eugenius. This was the signal for the beginning of an active Milanese involvement in Romagna and the Marches.<sup>109/</sup>

These events to the south of the Mantovano could still be a threat to Gianfrancesco and there was a very uncomfortable parallel between this and the Milanese activities of the 1420's which he could not fail to notice. A Milanese success here would eventually encourage them to pursue the Lombard war with renewed vigour and from a position of even greater strength. These fears were indeed justified. In September 1433, in his instructions to Jacobino de Iseo, Filippo Maria alluded to the possibility of his persuading both Este and Gianfrancesco to throw in their lot with Milan. It is true that he considered it very unlikely that Gianfrancesco would respond favourably, but it nevertheless formed part of a continuing policy of persuasion coupled with the possible result of making the Venetians

cast doubts on his ultimate fidelity.<sup>110/</sup> These instructions illustrate the Duke's intentions towards Mantua very clearly indeed. He stated openly that he would have no peace until he had beaten Venice and was waiting for the slightest pretext to start the war once again.<sup>111/</sup> It is also patently clear that he was ultimately determined to get Gianfrancesco onto his side,<sup>112/</sup> and he suggested to Jacobino that there were two powerful arguments he could use. Firstly, that the Venetians would ultimately absorb the Mantuan state, and secondly that Filippo Maria could offer him the albeit vague possibility of enlarging the Mantovano instead of it merely being the executor of Venetian policy.<sup>113/</sup> Although on this occasion, as before, Gianfrancesco was not disposed to oblige the Duke, these arguments nevertheless touched upon the core of Gianfrancesco's constant preoccupation. There is no doubt that they remained very firmly in his subconscious only to surface again some three years later.

In short, Filippo Maria's activities against Eugenius IV and the Papal States were very successful, firstly by encouraging Francesco Sforza's territorial ambitions in the Abruzzi and the Marche, and then more directly in sending Piccinio against Rome itself which ended in Eugenius's flight to Florence in June 1434.<sup>114/</sup> This was supplemented by diplomatic moves for an alliance with Savoy which finally concluded in October 1434,<sup>115/</sup> and attempts to capitalise on the rather cool relations between Venice and Florence.

Although the details of the campaign do not concern us, their possible consequences certainly do. It was part of an attempt to isolate Venice, to surround it gradually. This, of necessity, involved Gianfrancesco as well, and all this had the consequence of putting him on his guard more than ever, and also of trying to find any possible way of minimising the risk to Mantua's security.

It may have well been for the last reason that in 1434 Gianfrancesco was very anxious to keep up a fairly active relationship with Sigismund after he left Italy, through his ambassador Simone da Crema. Simone was also responsible for relaying messages to and from Frederick of Brandenburg.<sup>116/</sup> It may well be that Gianfrancesco was merely basking in his new Imperial status, but he also looked to Sigismund's support as well.

Of greater significance, perhaps, was the position of Francesco Sforza, whose shadow over Lombard affairs was to grow greater from now on. One of Filippo Maria's reasons for a more open strategy against Eugenius was because Sforza was characteristically pursuing his own ends and had opened negotiations with Eugenius. The Venetians were encouraging the Pope to be as accommodating as possible. Although the Senate had at first been rather worried about such a slippery customer as Sforza,<sup>117/</sup> it subsequently became one of Venice's major objectives to obtain his services; a policy which at first Gianfrancesco approved of but later seemed increasingly suspicious to him.<sup>118/</sup> However, for the time being he was following the progress of the negotiations with the greatest interest.

Sforza, a supreme example of how spectacularly successful a policy of sheer opportunism can sometimes be, was always difficult to pin down. Although he was openly fighting on the side of the anti-Viscontean league by the end of 1434, it was ultimately his policy to adopt as ambiguous a policy as possible.<sup>119/</sup>

With such disturbing events going on in the Papal States the utmost vigilance was required of Gianfrancesco to the west and the south. The extreme tension which existed sometimes found an outlet in border

incidents. For example in May 1434 there were some unpleasant encounters between Milanese and Venetian troops in the area around Soncino which Gianfrancesco had to deal with.<sup>120/</sup> Later on in the same month Pietro Quirino, the Podestà of Casalmaggiore, complained to the Senate that the area was being molested by ducal troops.<sup>121/</sup>

These encounters were relatively insignificant in themselves, but they serve to illustrate how uneasy the situation in Lombardy was. The tension in May tended to be increased because the Venetians, viewing Milanese actions in Bologna, were becoming more alarmed than ever, fearing that the Viscontean net was being gradually tightened.<sup>122/</sup> In fact, by the 19th May the position was such that the Senate ordered Gianfrancesco to mobilise the troops on the frontier area on a much larger scale than hitherto.<sup>123/</sup>

Although nothing came of this mobilisation, it was at least useful as a show of strength because although during July and August Bologna was the focal point of Milanese/Venetian confrontation, Milanese interference with the Oglio frontier, in flagrant defiance of the Peace of Ferrara, became more and more insistent, so much so that Niccolò d'Este once more had to bring the two sides together to sort out these problems, and these discussions continued, albeit in a somewhat desultory fashion, until well into the following January. As on previous occasions, these discussions were not intended to have any long term peaceful results. Under the guise of negotiations both sides were trying to manoeuvre themselves into a position which would give them added striking power when open hostilities were finally resumed.<sup>124/</sup> In fact, neither side doubted that this would be the case.

While these negotiations were proceeding Filippo Maria once more tried his luck with Gianfrancesco. At the beginning of September 1434 Gianfrancesco had sent on to Venice two letters he had received from Filippo Maria. This was precisely what he had done on the previous occasions. Although the Senate replied to his letter by emphasising the duplicity of the Visconti,<sup>125/</sup> it is clear that these approaches worried them and this may have partly been the reasoning behind Badoer's mission to Gianfrancesco. He was instructed to commend him for his fidelity and devotion to duty as well as to inform him of their renewed attempts to sort out matters in the Romagna,<sup>126/</sup> in furtherance of which they had decided to appoint Guidantonio Manfredi as commander of the army in that area, a move which met with Gianfrancesco's approval. Furthermore, Gianfrancesco was given permission to augment his condotta by 45 'lancie spezzate'.

The war raged between Bologna and Forlì until well into December, when Filippo Maria recalled Piccinino to Lombardy because he was by this time preparing to send him on an expedition to Naples against the Aragonese. The war itself was not to end officially until the end of September when Milanese troops were to remove all the men he had in Romagna, leaving Bologna to make what peace it could with the Pope.<sup>127/</sup> From now until the rebellion of Genoa the Duke of Milan interested himself with the problem of the Neapolitan succession.

Developments in Lombardy always seemed to echo what the Milanese were doing elsewhere in Italy. While there were active campaigns south of the Po, we have seen that Gianfrancesco was concerned with holding his forces in readiness to counteract any offensive from Milan, but when the events to the south seemed to be resolving themselves favourably,

the Venetians once again began to think about lateral expansion and consequently the years of 1435 and 1436 see a gradual but inevitable gravitation towards taking up where matters had been left at the second Peace of Ferrara. The consistent quarrel over the Adda boundary was also frequently punctuated by a desire to make inroads into the Milanese state when a suitable opportunity should present itself. This, in turn, meant that the pressures on Gianfrancesco tended to increase as well, and it is interesting to observe that as the prospect of a renewal of a Venetian war of expansion became more and more imminent, the doubts which had caused Gianfrancesco to be a reluctant commander revived. This occurred even before the outbreak of war in 1437.

The resurgence of Venetian interest in expansion showed itself as early as January 1435 in the instructions to Geronimo Contarini, Venetian ambassador to Sigismund. The negotiations turned once again on the Adda frontier. Contarini was to try and discover if Sigismund would actively support their claims to the land between the Adda and Oglio and he was to stress the fact that part of the territory had been formally promised to Gianfrancesco in 1433.<sup>128/</sup> How much weight this promise had with Sigismund is not evident, but by 20 April 1435 a tentative agreement had been reached with Sigismund in which he promised to invest Venice with all the lands on the right bank of the Adda while he would have the lands to the left.<sup>129/</sup> This virtually amounted to an agreement to divide the Milanese up between them. At the same time there was a renewal of the league with Florence on 19 April which included Ferrara, Ravenna, Rimini and Pesaro.<sup>130/</sup> All this gives added credence to the idea that from now on Venice was the real aggressor in the Lombard wars.

The most important development in Lombardy in this year was the concentration of Venetian troops after their recall from Bologna. Preliminary arrangements were made at the end of March but the movement of troops was to begin soon after April. On the 29th of that month Zaccario Bembo was instructed to inform the Pope of the recall "per securitate status nostri ad partes nostras Lombardie".<sup>131/</sup>

By June most of the troops had been transferred to Lombardy and thus came under Gianfrancesco's jurisdiction. On 1 June he was summoned to Venice in order to discuss plans for security and also long term prospects.<sup>132/</sup> At that time no imminent action was possible; after all a great deal of time had been spent in protesting about Filippo Maria's violation of his treaty obligations and any offensive by Venice would have been difficult to explain. The thinking behind the recall of the troops shows a great similarity to the situation which existed in 1425. Although the concentrations of troops on the frontiers were to be continued and in certain strategic areas, stepped up, the Venetians wanted to have the whole army reasonably accessible at a time when things were definitely moving towards a conflict with Milan in Lombardy.

This is precisely what was done when Gianfrancesco returned to Brescia.<sup>133/</sup> It seems that throughout the rest of the year what amounted to a cold war was being waged. Despite all warnings, there continued to be border disputes around Bordolano<sup>134/</sup> and restrictions on the movement of civilians were tightened up in the border areas.<sup>135/</sup> The threats of military action were beginning to loom very large by this time.

After most of the year had been taken up with increasing military resources in Lombardy it seems rather odd that the end of the year should have been occupied with an argument with Gianfrancesco over

503.

a reduction of his condotta. This is obviously how Gianfrancesco saw the situation himself; but once again the Venetians were hampered by lack of money to sustain such numbers over a lengthy period of time. On 1 October, instructions were issued to the 'collaterale' Belpetro Manelmi to reduce Gianfrancesco's condotta to 500 lances.<sup>136/</sup> When he had complained about this Belpetro was asked by the Senate to explain the financial reasoning behind this.<sup>137/</sup> In the end Paolo Tron had to be sent to calm Gianfrancesco's injured feelings.<sup>138/</sup> There is no record of any other dealings over this matter, and the next 'refirma' of 26 November 1436 indicated 600 lances and 300 infantry,<sup>139/</sup> so it must be concluded that Gianfrancesco had been prepared to accept a temporary reduction in his condotta. Although in the particular circumstances no immediate damage was done to Venice's relations with Gianfrancesco over this, it is yet another occasion when he was prepared to challenge the Senate where his own interests were concerned.

During 1436 Gianfrancesco was very much busier than he had been in the previous two years because it is in this year that the renewal of the war between Venice and Milan became much more of a reality. It was also a year in which family problems added yet another complication to Gianfrancesco's relationship with Venice.

The acceleration of the drift towards open war started with the rebellion of Genoa against Filippo Maria which was partly the result of the Milanese alliance with the Aragonese. However, there had for some time been a growing antipathy to the Viscontean presence in Genoa which finally erupted in the revolt of 27 December 1435 led by Francesco Spinola.<sup>140/</sup>



Although Filippo Maria had been aware for some time that there had been disaffection in Genoa he appears to have done very little to counteract it. Faced with the opposition of Piccinino and a huge army the rebels appealed for help to Eugenius, Venice and Florence. The Geonese rebellion had all the signs of becoming a grim and drawn out struggle for liberation and this was a marvellous pretext for the Venetians to take up arms against Milan while seeming at the same time to be one of the defenders of Genoese liberty.

This would certainly seem to be the case judging from the Venetian instructions to Gianfrancesco on 2 January 1436. Gianfrancesco had spent the winter months in Mantua and the Senate, informing him of the developments in Genoa, now ordered once again a mobilisation of troops along the frontiers; but on this occasion it was to be for a longer period.<sup>141/</sup> Furthermore, a member of the Senate was to consult personally with him in order to find out what action he considered feasible over the Genoese question. It was clear that Gianfrancesco had to go to Brescia immediately to supervise these preparations and to make sure that nothing was done without express instructions from the Senate.<sup>142/</sup>

At the same time instructions were sent to the podesta of Brescia requiring him to consult with the Cavalcabò - "et nobis placet", the instructions read, "ut cum amicis suis cremonenses et per omnem modum possibilem procuret praticare et instar ut civitas Cremona se subtrahat ad obedientie ducis, dando amicis suis".<sup>143/</sup> He was ordered to consult Gianfrancesco over this but was asked not to interfere if Gianfrancesco wished to do this himself.<sup>144/</sup> The Milanese possession of Cremona had always been one of the major bugbears of Venetian policy in Lombardy and these initiatives show their intentions were clear indeed. This was part of the preparation for aggression.

Judging from the subsequent correspondence, Gianfrancesco was in touch with the Cavalcabò and consequently there was a stepping up of vigilance in the area around Casalmaggiore which was most vulnerable to any variations in the Cremonese. In February and March Gianfrancesco was in constant touch with the podestà of Casalmaggiore over fortifications and any movements of Milanese troops in the area were to be carefully monitored,<sup>145/</sup> although at this stage the Senate was most anxious that there should be no overt provocative action by its troops. Venice was clearly not interested in skirmishings, it was planning a large scale campaign which could not be jeopardised by any impulsive action.

The inevitability of an open war was by now patently obvious and, with the renewal of Venice's ambitious territorial policies, Gianfrancesco's apprehensions revived once more and this showed itself in February and March when he had been angered and alarmed at news of criticisms which had been levelled against him in Venice and Brescia, and this occurred at a time when his own relations with Ludovico were undergoing a marked decline.

Gianfrancesco was so angered at these (unspecified) criticisms that Frederico Contarini was sent to him with assurances of the Senate's continued goodwill and approval.<sup>146/</sup> By the beginning of March Contarini was able to report back that Gianfrancesco's mind had been put at rest over this matter.<sup>147/</sup> The Venetians acted quickly over this because they could not afford to have the sort of trouble which they had had with Gianfrancesco in 1433. This became quite urgent as Gianfrancesco's 'firma' expired in the following May and Venice wanted the customary renewal of one year with six months 'di rispetto' and evidently the Senate was worried that he might not agree to their terms; they hinted as much to Contarini.<sup>148/</sup> The Venetians were

prepared to modify his terms provided he would stay on. On 9 March the Senate mentioned to Contarini that it would be prepared to accept a 'refirma' of only six months with a further six 'di rispetto' should this be at all necessary.<sup>149/</sup>

The 'refirma' of 19 March was only for eight months<sup>150/</sup> and even then it was not without some qualification. First of all he insisted that his wartime condotta should not consist of less than 600 lances, and he now informed Venice that it was not his intention to stay as Captain General indefinitely; he wished to be released from his obligation after the planned war was over.<sup>151/</sup> Although the Senate sympathised with this wish it did not regard it as being very serious at the time. At least he had decided to give his support in wartime and there were plenty of opportunities to induce him to change his mind.

There are a number of reasons which would explain this behaviour, some identical to the previous occasion. However, now there is the definite impression that Gianfrancesco felt that the Senate did not have complete confidence in him. This may have been a subjective feeling, but the criticisms, vague though they were, tended to bite deep. Moreover, the Venetians were actively involved in trying to get Francesco Sforza to fight with them and he feared that the other man might be a rival for command and that it might be consequently more politic to bow out before the indignity of being ousted. It is certainly true that the Venetians sensed that this is what Gianfrancesco might have been thinking because it was part of Contarini's commission to assure him that if they did succeed in getting Sforza there would be no question of depriving him of the supreme command.<sup>152/</sup> However, Gianfrancesco's suspicions had been

aroused and it is probable that Contarini did not completely allay them.<sup>153/</sup>  
 For their part it is difficult to believe that their contingency plans did not include possible alternatives or substitutes for the Captain Generalship.

At this time Gianfrancesco was planning to go to Marmirolo for a period of cure with Venice's consent; but there were other matters on his mind. His relations with Ludovico had been none too harmonious and this ultimately resulted in his son's defection to Milan in April. The documentation behind this issue is very thin indeed and has led to a number of speculations. It has been suggested that Gianfrancesco tended to favour Carlo whose interests were much more akin to his own and that this had aroused his elder brother's mistrust and resentment; and it is certainly true that their relations even after Gianfrancesco's death were not of the best. Furthermore it has also been suggested that his marriage to Barbara of Brandenburg was not a happy one. There were as yet no children and Gianfrancesco was beginning to be apprehensive about the succession.

Another, more political interpretation of this quarrel is that the defection of Ludovico was an astute move by Gianfrancesco to ensure that there would be a Gonzaga on whichever side would win in the war and that his indignant reaction in favouring Carlo as his heir was an elaborate move to assure the Venetians of his continued fidelity.<sup>154/</sup> This would tend to fit in quite well with Gianfrancesco's growing reluctance to retain the Venetian command, but it does not adequately explain why the final reconciliation did not take place until 13 April 1440.

The only document relating to this in the Mantuan Archive is a letter written by Ludovico to Chierighino Chierigati on 20 April 1436, a week or so after his defection.<sup>155/</sup> In it he tried to justify his action and the bulk of the letter explains his utter exasperation of the insults and innuendoes he had had to suffer at the hands of his father which had made it impossible for him to remain in Mantua:

"Tu say anchora le vilani e false e deshoneste parole che sono state usate de lì..... E però mi pare strano che tu te meravegli che io sia partito de lì che tu poi ben credere che homo che habia qualche animo in corpo odendo dir ogni dì de suo padre e specialmente de cossi-fato padre quello che tu say quello che io udiva del mio non pria patire simele lesione ale orecche. Siché io ho più tosto deliberato habandonar tutto zio che io ho habandonato che 156/  
sofrire simele cosse."

However much credence one may give to the political interpretation of Ludovico's action this letter does display that there were open differences between father and son at the time.

On 21 April Ludovico was awarded a condotta of 300 cavalry by Filippo Maria in which he undertook to serve him against any enemy with the exception of his father and the Mantuan state.<sup>157/</sup>

Whatever Gianfrancesco's motives may have been, it was essential for him to take some action against Ludovico, coming as it did at a time when he himself had made such difficulties over his 'refirma'. On 15 April he informed the Senate that he intended to disinherit Ludovico in favour of Carlo and that he was going to petition Sigismund to make the necessary alterations in the Imperial diploma.<sup>158/</sup> On the following day Venice replied that it would protect anyone Gianfrancesco named as his legitimate successor<sup>159/</sup> and by 3 November he had in his hands a privilege

from Sigismund allowing him to leave the Marquisate to any other legitimate son he wished. Although the Emperor readily granted Gianfrancesco the privilege, he wrote a letter to Paola on 9 June expressing his concern at what Simone da Crema had told him. He sympathised with Gianfrancesco's request, but he also applied the parable of the Prodigal Son to Ludovico's case. Although, he said, Ludovico, in his youthful passion, has succumbed to the serpentine advances of the Visconti, he nevertheless hoped that a reconciliation might still be possible. However, this attempt to get Gianfrancesco to think again by working on Paola's maternal susceptibilities did not prove successful.<sup>160/</sup> Gianfrancesco's quick reaction in disinheriting Ludovico is yet another indication of how nervous he was at this time. It is possible to sense that in many ways he was beginning to feel trapped by Venice at the very time when his suspicions were being aroused. Furthermore, as will be indicated below, Gianfrancesco was by no means sure that Carlo was completely devoted to the Venetian cause.

By May events seemed to quicken even further. On the 29th Genoa finally signed a treaty with Florence and the League, a defensive alliance against Milan and its allies.<sup>161/</sup> Earlier in this month Geronimo Contarini had been sent to the Pope to induce him to consent to Sforza's joining the League.<sup>162/</sup> Florence tended to support these measures because a major war in Lombardy would relieve pressures in Tuscany. It seemed, therefore, that everything was poised for an ultimatum to be issued to the Milanese.

While this was going on Gianfrancesco was concerned with building up resources and finishing contingency plans for war. For instance, on 13 May he was suggesting that 1,000 more infantry should be raised to reinforce the army.<sup>163/</sup> This was accomplished by the beginning of June.

In addition to this he was constantly impressing the need for sufficient funds to be available to pay the men and, at least for this period, they seemed to be forthcoming, although the Senate was very anxious that the money should not be squandered in any way.<sup>164/</sup>

Furthermore, at Gianfrancesco's suggestion, Ugutione de Canarini was sent to Niccolò d'Este in order to make sure of his support. Gianfrancesco himself was preparing to strengthen his already strong matrimonial ties with the house of Este by a marriage between Carlo, his heir, and Lucia, and he hoped that Venice would help in the negotiations.<sup>165/</sup>

By June the military and diplomatic preparations of the League were complete and an ultimatum was issued to Filippo Maria. The rather lame pretext for doing so was that interfering in the Papal States and in the Regno had been a violation of the Treaty of 1435. Filippo Maria tried to argue that he had no warlike intentions towards the League and proposed discussions at Bologna through the mediation of the Pope. These discussions, which did take place in August, had no hope of resolving the situation because by now Venice wanted war with Milan at all costs.

By the end of the year everything was poised for war. Despite his 'peaceful' intentions Filippo Maria had sent Piccinino into Lucca and subsequently to Sarzana. This was a flagrant flouting of the ultimatum.<sup>166-/</sup> In November 1436 Sforza had finally agreed to serve the League with a condotta of 1,000 lances and 1,000 infantry for a period of 5 years in return for 14,000 florins a month.<sup>167/</sup> Furthermore he was to have the title of Captain General of the League "et habia tuti quelli honori, dignità e preheminentia che altro Capitan Generale... potesse havere".<sup>168/</sup> While this did not affect Gianfrancesco's position as Captain General of the Venetian,

army which was something quite separate, this appointment nevertheless tended to increase his suspicions rather than to allay his fears, particularly as the Venetians were constantly trying to get Sforza to come to Lombardy. In the end it was just as well that Sforza, who even now had not decided to break definitively with Filippo Maria, behaved so ambiguously that the possible complications resulting from his crossing the Po were for the time being avoided.<sup>169/</sup>

For the third successive time in Gianfrancesco's life war was about to engulf Lombardy, but this time the new year was to bring even greater responsibilities and pressures for him. Although he had been Captain General for the past four years there had been nothing of note against which he could prove his worth apart from the brief period up to the second Peace of Ferrara in which his actual involvement had been small.

Although the situation during these years in Lombardy had by no means been easy, he had carried out his duties to the best of his ability and to the evident satisfaction of the Venetian Senate which had been tireless in its attempts to keep him happy and giving him the support he required.

Nevertheless all was not really well with Gianfrancesco on the eve of 1437. In the first place he had only taken on the job in response to a considerable amount of Venetian and diplomatic pressure, and an examination of the material available for these years does not indicate that Gianfrancesco felt any happier about his position; on the contrary new doubts were beginning to assail him, as we have seen. These involved the circumstances surrounding the Venetian approaches to Sforza and the possible repercussions from the defection of his son Ludovico. Furthermore, during



the previous two years it had been Venice above all which had become the prime mover in the revival of the Lombard wars.

In 1436 Gianfrancesco had contracted to remain in his position as commander primarily because he was becoming alarmed at what could happen to Mantua if he now refused. He may well have called to mind Jacobino de Iseo's warnings from Filippo Maria about Venice's ultimate intentions.

This, however, did not mean that Gianfrancesco intended to carry out his duties in a halfhearted fashion; that could have been even more dangerous. There was only one direction in which a Captain General could travel. He clearly appreciated that a successful Venetian war could bring him considerable advantages. All Gianfrancesco could now do was to wait and see how things would eventually turn out.

The most important point which emerges from a study of the years from 1433 to 1436 is that even before the war was resumed the seeds of the crisis of 1438 had already been planted. As he surveyed the political scene Gianfrancesco must surely have sensed that the next few years were going to be among the most critical ones he would ever have to face.

#### IV

##### War and Disillusionment

In a letter dated 18 January 1437 Filippo Maria asked Piccinino bluntly his opinion as to whether there should be war or peace. Four days later he replied in the following manner:

"el parere mio `è che quando la excellentia vostra potesse havere bona pace e firma, et non de le usate, sia molto mehllo la pace che la guerra; ma quando questa dovesse essere de la pace usate le quale non mi pare che li vostri inimici habiano mai facto ad altro fine, se non per potervi più gravemente offendere; laudaria più tosto la guerra che la signoria vostra po fare che tale pace..." 170/

Given the preparations which had already been put in motion in the previous year by the Venetians, this was really the only rational reaction which was possible. Already the cold war with Venice was being stepped up. Gianfrancesco was charged with making sure that all passes were closed with Milan both for trading and for any other purpose.<sup>171/</sup> Furthermore, all Milanese were cleared away from the border areas. In order that the preparations and surveillance should be properly supervised the Senate urged Gianfrancesco to go to Brescia as early as possible.<sup>172/</sup> He was there by the end of the month actively concerting security plans with such people as the Podestà of Casalmaggiore, Leonardo Mocenigo,<sup>173/</sup> all of which the Senate heartily approved of, although Gianfrancesco was still pressing for more money from Venice to finalise plans.<sup>174/</sup> At this stage the Senate wanted everything to be directly co-ordinated by Gianfrancesco and, by 22 January, was promising him faithfully that it would send him at least another 4,000 ducats to keep him happy for the time being.<sup>175/</sup> It was clear from the tone of the letter that Gianfrancesco was getting more and more insistent with the Senate over the question of money. This did not only mean money for arms and supplies, but also to pay his soldiers. In this respect the Venetians were not at all efficient during this part of the war. Even before the campaign started in March Venetian officials were finding it more and more difficult to meet Gianfrancesco's requests and

pay was often many months in arrears. For instance, on 31 January the Senate agreed to disburse the double pay which Gianfrancesco had requested,<sup>176/</sup> but by 6 February they had only sufficient funds to send him one pay because they were having difficulty in calling in their debts.<sup>177/</sup> In fact, in a number of cases some pay was still outstanding from the previous October.<sup>178/</sup> It was this sort of thing which was to make Gianfrancesco continually frustrated as the war started; not only did it tend to hamper preparations, but the frustration which it caused among the army could so easily lead to indiscipline. This put increased pressure on Gianfrancesco at a time when there were other pressing calls upon his time. It may well have been as a result of such matters that he had to deal with an outbreak of indiscipline at Bergamo at the beginning of March, just when the campaign was beginning to get under way. The strictures of the Senate for a situation which it had helped to cause itself frequently made Gianfrancesco very angry.<sup>179/</sup>

The opening months of 1437 saw new concentrations of troops in the Bresciano, and an intense watchfulness in the Po area, while the Venetians were trying their utmost to whip up enthusiasm for the impending struggle among the Genoese, the Florentines, the Pope, and, above all, Francesco Sforza. The "Lettere Segrete del Collegio" in the Venetian Archive contains literally hundreds of entries relating to such matters. In particular, during 1437 the Senate was to devote an ever increasing amount of energy in trying to get Sforza to cross the Po in order to help in the Lombard offensive, an action which Sforza's ambiguous attitude would not permit. This was why he contented himself with besieging such places as Lucca for the Florentines during a good part of this period, a matter which in itself tended to increase Venetian frustration at what it came to regard as the Florentines' apathy in not giving them the tools to pursue the war as vigorously as they wished.

In addition to this the Venetians had secured the services of Guidantonio Manfredi (Faenza) and were urging Gianfrancesco to probe the possibilities of using the Cavalcabò to infiltrate Cremona. This was a plan which the Venetians had had for some time but could not implement because there had been too much else to do.<sup>180/</sup>

The mobilisation was complete by the middle of February and, on the 15th of the month, the Venetians ordered Gianfrancesco to go and occupy Bordolano because this was the most convenient point, and strategically one of the most advantageous ones at which to begin operations.<sup>181/</sup> On 18 February in a strong letter to their ambassador in Florence, Matteo Vitturi, he was instructed to inform them "quod faciamus magnam subventionem gentibus nostras" and that they hoped that Florence would do the same in pursuance of such an honourable cause.<sup>182/</sup>

On the following day the Senate received information of the Battle of the Barga in which Sforza had defeated Piccinino. This was yet another stage in the war around Lucca which had tended to swing violently from side to side.<sup>183/</sup> This victory for Sforza and, consequently, for the League, was very gratifying to Venice, but there was also another aspect of the battle which closely concerned them. Among the prisoners taken during the fighting was none other than Gianfrancesco's renegade son Ludovico.<sup>184/</sup> On 20 February Vitturi was sent to Sforza in order to start negotiations about Ludovico being transferred to their custody.<sup>185/</sup>

The fact that Sforza had possession of Ludovico tended to increase Venetian anxiety over his participation in the forthcoming war and their continual interest in Ludovico's welfare for the rest of the year could be seen in terms of the Senate acting in Gianfrancesco's interests.

There are no surviving letters from Gianfrancesco to Venice over this matter. His attitude can only be gleaned from the Venetian side of the correspondence. Although he was naturally anxious to be fully informed about his son, there is no indication that he wanted to be reconciled to him at that time. If, as has been suggested above, it is arguable that Ludovico went over to Milan with his father's complicity, it would have been extremely embarrassing for a potential ally of Venice to have possession of him. In fact, Gianfrancesco appears to have been very non-committal over the custody of his son. In their correspondence with Gianfrancesco over this the Venetians were always anxious to give him the impression that they were concerned about his welfare,<sup>186/</sup> but their policy in the end was to be as vague as that of Gianfrancesco because they did not want to annoy or upset him on this delicate matter.

However, behind any elaborate assurances, the possibility of getting Ludovico had advantages in that it could act as an additional lever on Gianfrancesco. While it is true that Gianfrancesco had disinherited Ludovico by this time, the Venetians evidently still considered that the bond was strong enough to try their best to get hold of him. As it turned out, though, Sforza's own position *vis-a-vis* Venice and Milan made Ludovico a very valuable possession and, much to the disappointment of the Senate, was not at all disposed to part with him. The whole question of Ludovico was yet another weight on his father's mind and it came at the worst psychological moment.

However, on the surface, Gianfrancesco's subsequent behaviour does not indicate that these events had any significantly adverse effect in purely material terms. On 23 February the Senate had been informed

that Gianfrancesco was on the point of moving against the enemy.<sup>187/</sup>

In fact, the Venetian army left Brescia two days later, and a pretty impressive sight it must have been. It was reported that Gianfrancesco marched "... cum equis 6,000 utilibus, absque cariagiis, gentium nostrorum armigerorum ac peditibus forenses 4,000, 500 cernedis, 2,000 vastatoribus, 3,000 carribus, 650 variis munitionibus bombardis, lignaminibus aliisqui multis rebus et instrumentis bellicis oneratus, et cum aliis notabilibus provisionibus".<sup>188/</sup>

Amongst many other condottieri there were Gattamelata as his second-in-command, Brandolini, Pietro Navarino, Guidantonio and Astorre Manfredi, Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, Bartolomeo Colleoni, Guido Rangone, Guerriero Marsiano and Antonio Martinasco.<sup>189/</sup> At last the decisive move had been made and the size of the army left no doubt as to the size and scope of operations. Moreover, this is reinforced by the initial tactics which were employed in this war. The army marched, not into the Cremonese, but towards Bergamo, arriving there at three o'clock in the morning on 26 February,<sup>190/</sup> which shows in itself how anxious the Venetians were that no time should be lost. While the Senate continued to hope and beg, with increasing insistence, that the Pope would allow Sforza to back up these operations further south, the march towards Bergamo was the quickest way of crossing the Adda and taking the war immediately into the Milanese. After the lack of success further south it was to be hoped that these more decisive tactics would achieve the required effect. Furthermore, they were reasonably content that the area around Brescia was sufficiently well fortified.

By 27 February the Venetian army was encamped at Mapello, some five kilometres from the Adda and, in their instructions to the provveditore Stefano Contarini, the Senate was urging a crossing of the Adda at Medolago or any other suitable point in the vicinity. Contarini was urged to employ all his powers of persuasion with Gianfrancesco to wage a vigorous campaign, not only for the honour of Venice, but also for that of Mantua.<sup>191/</sup> The tactics were daring and important headway had to be made before the enemy had time to organise themselves.

There were, however, a number of problems which a crossing at this point could present. The Adda in this area flows very swiftly and the construction of a bridge was consequently more arduous. In February and March the water level was even higher than usual, but the bridge had to go ahead and Gianfrancesco in particular had to consult very closely with Gattamelata and the other captains over the details of this project.<sup>192/</sup>

The difficulties in the way of building the bridge proved to be much more formidable than had been expected. Not only was the plan discovered by the enemy, but also the bridge was impossible to construct because of the height of the waters and the ferocious current.<sup>193/</sup> Furthermore, part of the army, some 500 infantry including Gattamelata<sup>194/</sup> had forded the river with great difficulty but had been trapped on the opposite side. Many men had panicked and drowned in their attempts to rejoin the rest of the army. In fact even Gattamelata only barely escaped with his life.

The failure to cross the Adda yet again was a grave disappointment to the Senate, but this had hardly been Gianfrancesco's fault and, in a

letter of 4 March to him, the Senate was trying to be as sympathetic and as encouraging as possible. It reiterated its confidence in his abilities and urged him to make the best out of this situation. It wanted him as far as possible to remain in Ghiaradadda, preferably in the area around Mozzanica, and wanted him to strike "quanto acerius possibile sit".<sup>195/</sup>

However, the element of surprise intended by the Venetians had now been dissipated and it was hard to imagine that the Milanese would not react fairly quickly. The news of this attempt so close to Milan had shaken Filippo Maria and in order to counteract the Venetian offensive he decided to recall Piccinino from the Lunigiana as well as calling upon Savoy for help.<sup>196/</sup> This now placed even more pressure on the Venetians to take the initiative before he should arrive. It is clear, even at this point, that the Senate was afraid that the campaign would degenerate into the sort of dilatoriness which had preceded the second Peace of Ferrara. This was why it was watching Piccinino's movements very closely indeed at the same time as urging Gianfrancesco forward.<sup>197/</sup> It was not surprising in the circumstances that tempers were frequently frayed. This was occurring at the same time as the outbreak of indiscipline in Bergamo and Gianfrancesco's own disappointment at the inauspicious beginning of the campaign turned to anger at Venice's over-insistence,<sup>198/</sup> and this was certainly not the last time this was to occur. It was not simply that Gianfrancesco had to wage an offensive against the Milanese; at the same time, he also had to make sure that the remaining occupied territory was well fortified, especially the area around Crema and Bordolano.<sup>199/</sup> This was even more pressing since information had reached them that Piccinino was already on his way to Lombardy by 4 March.<sup>200/</sup> However, he was not to take any active part in operations until the following June.



Despite constant encouragement from the Senate, the momentum of the campaign seems to have been lost after the unsuccessful attempt to cross the Adda. Already by the end of March the Milanese were strengthening their positions in the Ghiaradadda while no significant advance had been made by the Venetians.<sup>201/</sup> Furthermore, information had reached Casalmaggiore that a ducal river fleet was preparing to sail down the Po towards Brescello, thus threatening the Mantovano.<sup>202/</sup> It was developments such as these which tended to make the dilemma facing Gianfrancesco even more acute. It was very difficult for him to keep his mind on what was going on in the Ghiaradadda when his own territories were being endangered even though the Senate acted quickly in raising a fleet of 20 galleys to counteract this threat.<sup>203/</sup>

Not only had the momentum been lost, there was also the beginning of a divergence of aims between the Senate and its military commander. As with Carmagnola's direction of the first phase of the war, the overall strategy did not always correspond with military feasibility. It was far too easy to formulate grand designs in Venice but rather a different proposition making them a reality. Even if the Venetian army had crossed the Adda at Medolago, this did not solve the problem of subduing the intervening territory between that river and the Oglio further south. From a purely military and territorial point of view this was the thorn which had to be grasped in order to make a reality of Venetian expansionist aims. It was a fundamental weakness in Venetian policy to place too much reliance on Francesco Sforza covering the area. The Senate, so astute in many respects, failed to see the import behind Sforza's unwillingness to move. There was no point in spectacular military moves if the intervening territory could not be subdued. This is yet another example of this Venetian obsession with moving too fast for its own good. This time Gianfrancesco, instead

of Carmagnola, was to be the victim and with monetary problems, and differences with both the provveditori and Gattamelata, Gianfrancesco cannot be blamed in thinking that history was beginning to repeat itself.

In fact, the whole configuration of the rest of the campaign for the year does bear a remarkable resemblance to the last stage in Carmagnola's career. After beginning optimistically at Medolago, it continued in a rather lower key in the Cremasco, and after the decisive intervention of Piccinino from June onwards, ended with the Venetians being pushed back across the Oglio. It is now important to document the salient features of these remaining months as far as they reveal and develop this parallelism.

On 4 April the Venetians sent Paolo Tron to Gianfrancesco with a special commission to get him to move against the enemy before the arrival of Piccinino made matters more difficult.<sup>204/</sup> In order to quicken things up still further Pietro Loredan was elected as provveditore in order to supervise activities.

However, and possibly more significantly, Tron was also specially asked to consult with Gattamelata over this matter and he was substantially in agreement with Venice's policy. The Venetians had already a high opinion of Gattamelata's ability; they considered him "in exercicio armorum expertissimo.... propter longam practicam quem habuit".<sup>205/</sup> They had already been impressed by his valour at Medolago and, as an ambitious man with no territorial responsibilities, it was very much in his interests to raise his credit with his employers.<sup>206/</sup> It may well be that Gianfrancesco was beginning to feel that the Venetians were courting

his second-in-command very much in the same way as he himself had been courted in the past. In fact, Gianfrancesco was once again disturbed at the end of April by evil rumours circulating about him in Venice.<sup>207/</sup>

At a time when the area to the south was being threatened there seemed to be no point in keeping the army in Bergamo. It was important especially to take remedial action in and around Brignano and Tron seems to have been successful in getting some action here and the Senate were quick to promise money and supplies to back this up.<sup>208/</sup>

The question of money was a very pertinent one because the war was beginning to have an adverse effect upon Gianfrancesco's own personal financial situation by this time. We have already had cause to mention the stream of demands for money to be sent to him from Mantua during the previous stage of the war. The same was true during this period.<sup>209/</sup> However, on this occasion the demands were much more onerous and not only was Paola forced to sell valuables in Venice to meet these demands, but Gianfrancesco was forced to call in old debts. One particularly difficult and embarrassing example of this concerned the Malatesta of Pesaro. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Gianfrancesco had concerned himself with the succession problems and family rivalries of the Malatesta family. The details of such problems and rivalries which largely lie outside the scope of the present discussion are extremely well documented in the Gonzaga Archive.<sup>210/</sup> In brief, the Malatesta of Pesaro, financially weak, and threatened by Rimini, the Pope, and frightened of Francesco Sforza, were trying during this period to get Gianfrancesco and Este to intervene on their behalf, largely through the intercession of Paola. During the period immediately preceding the renewal of the war both Gianfrancesco and Este had been fairly active on their behalf, not only through the normal diplomatic

channels, but also financially. In 1435, a number of fortresses had been pledged to Gianfrancesco for a sum of money.<sup>211/</sup> Now that the war had increased the financial pressures upon Gianfrancesco, he wanted the pledge to be redeemed. This was made very clear in his correspondence both with Paola and with Giovanni Tomeo Donesmondi, the Mantuan ambassador to Pesaro. Clearly Gianfrancesco was no longer in a position to help Paola's relations.<sup>212/</sup> Moreover, he was aware of the complications which his continued help might have *vis-a-vis* Sforza, whom the Venetians were actively trying to engage and who, moreover, had possession of Ludovico.<sup>213/</sup> This affair is indicative of the other smaller problems which concerned Gianfrancesco at this time. This constant worry over money in particular tended to add considerably to his preoccupations. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that he frequently found it difficult to give his wholehearted attention to purely military matters.

However, by 30 April Tron could report success at Brignano to the Senate,<sup>214/</sup> and it was hoped now that this would inspire the army to even greater things. Gianfrancesco went on to Treviglio to follow up this victory and a number of smaller castles in the surrounding area were captured.

But this activity was not maintained. Once again the campaign ground to a standstill. Gianfrancesco was reluctant to continue westwards because he considered he had insufficient men and supplies to do so. On 30 April, in his report to the Senate giving his proposals for the fortification of Brignano, he had requested reinforcements which the Senate considered unnecessary. It replied to him on 5 May reminding him that he himself had told Tron that he had sufficient men provided that

Piccinino could be kept away from Lombardy and advised him to attack at the first opportunity either in the Ghiaradadda or the Cremonese, certainly not later than the middle of May,<sup>215/</sup> while at the same time keeping occupied areas well fortified. Pietro Loredan arrived on 6 May with these instructions.<sup>216/</sup> Two days later in an attempt to spur Gianfrancesco to action the Senate told him that it had been rumoured that Piccinino had come to Lombardy with only 1,500 cavalry "male in ordino" and that consequently an immediate offensive was necessary.<sup>217/</sup>

In fact the danger from Piccinino was not at all immediate, but even these rumours did not have the required effect on Gianfrancesco. It is clear that he did not feel secure enough to launch a new attack and, moreover, matters were not helped by the fact that Gianfrancesco was once again annoyed that his pay was months behind. This was not cleared up until 23 May when he agreed to "exire in campo cum paga mensis Martii sic fecit Gattamelata".<sup>218/</sup> The Senate clearly felt that Gianfrancesco was making unnecessary delays and that relations with Gattamelata were not nearly as problematical.

It was not until 6 June that the Venetian army marched and this time the action was to be in the Cremonese, initially around Binanova.<sup>219/</sup> Once again the Senate hoped that a significant advance could be reported.<sup>220/</sup> Unfortunately it was once again to be disappointed. This time the situation was even more difficult than before because Piccinino's arrival in the Cremonese was imminent. Far from taking the offensive, Gianfrancesco was forced to fortify himself at Casalbuttano, a secure place.<sup>221/</sup> Even the Senate itself warned that to be safety conscious in these circumstances was of paramount importance ; "in salute exercitum et gentium nostrarum consistat salus status nostri...".<sup>222/</sup>

With matters moving from bad to worse as Piccinino pushed the Venetians back on all fronts, not only in the Cremonese, but also in the Bergamasco,<sup>223/</sup> the Venetians renewed their frantic appeals to Sforza to help them, but to no avail. Reluctant to break completely with Filippo Maria, he ultimately moved as far as Reggio, but was unwilling to cross the Po using the excuse of lack of military strength and his anxiety over his lands in the March. Moreover, the Venetian demands caused friction with Florence, who were less anxious than ever to lose Sforza's help over Lucca. It looked very much as though serious splits were becoming apparent in the League at the worst possible time for Venice.<sup>224/</sup>

The arrival of Piccinino in Lombardy was the signal for the collapse of the Venetian war effort for the time being. For the rest of the campaigning season there was no positive result from Venice. Gianfrancesco seemed to have lost the initiative completely and a campaign in which Piccinino ended up calling the tune meant that it proved almost impossible to consolidate his position anywhere.

Not only was Gianfrancesco's own morale low,<sup>225/</sup> so was that among the army. In July there was further trouble over money and he was told to keep a tighter hold on discipline.<sup>226/</sup> Furthermore there were differences of opinion between some of the captains and although Gianfrancesco managed to patch matters up to a certain extent this was to occur even more frequently in the following months.<sup>227/</sup> In fact the strain on Loredan was also beginning to tell because during July; owing to illness and exhaustion, he was temporarily replaced by Francesco Barbaro.

In fact, Gianfrancesco was so disheartened at the beginning of this month that he thought of withdrawing back across the Oglio, a move

which was expressly forbidden by the Senate.<sup>228/</sup> However, even though it was perhaps only natural for him to have these feelings, it was most unfortunate that at this very time Filippo Maria was trying to re-open his approaches to him. On 7 July he had sent a letter to Venice from Fontanelle in the Bergamasco reporting that Filippo Maria, through Guido Torello, had proposed that there might be the possibility of a marriage between his daughter Bianca and Carlo Gonzaga, whose wife Lucia d'Este had recently died.<sup>229/</sup> Bianca had already been promised to Sforza and Gianfrancesco, suspicious of the Duke's motives, felt that the best thing to do was to relay the information to the Senate, which promptly told Gianfrancesco to treat this with the contempt it deserved,<sup>230/</sup> while reassuring him at the same time that this Milanese approach cast no shadow over his own fidelity to Venice. It nevertheless informed Loredan, recuperating in Brescia, and asked him to keep an eye on any subsequent developments. This was neither the first nor the last time in which Filippo Maria tried to compromise Gianfrancesco's position in this way. Visconti was a past master at choosing the most opportune moment.

The miserable canon of failure continued through the months of July and August, and Marco Dandolo, the ambassador to Sigismund, in a resumé of the progress of the army, could only report that the Milanese were too deeply entrenched in the Cremonese, Ghiaradadda and the Bergamasco for any advance to be made.<sup>231/</sup> No amount of persuasion by Loredan could alter this unhappy situation, not even assurances of a Venetian intention to send a fleet up the Po to protect Mantua against any Milanese operations in this area.<sup>232/</sup> This was not merely the result of any reticence on Gianfrancesco's part. The truth of the matter was that the front along which the Venetian army was fighting was much too wide to succeed without a

more efficient deployment of troops and the Senate was completely against any division of forces. Time and time again during August it wrote to Gianfrancesco warning him of the importance of keeping the army intact and united.<sup>233/</sup> Given the fact that Sforza was never in evidence to come to his aid and also that the onus of advance was on the Venetian army, this attitude was ultimately a recipe for failure. Once again there is this divergence between what the Senate wanted and what was militarily desirable.

By the beginning of September it was the Milanese who were making all the headway. Bergamo was threatened and reinforcements were called from Brescia and Verona while even more urgent pleas were sent to the Florentines for help. In fact the situation was so bad that Gianfrancesco felt that the time had come to cut his losses and advised that it would be more politic to retire beyond the Oglio because he feared that a major engagement with Piccinino would prove an unqualified disaster.<sup>234/</sup> The Senate, however, urged him to hold on as long as possible while it made a last attempt to persuade Sforza to help.<sup>235/</sup> This did not prove possible; Piccinino's advance was irresistible and with the successive occupation of Trescore, Sarnica, Predore, Vignano, Cologne, Brignano, Caprino as well as the valleys of the Bergamasco by the end of September the Venetian achievement had evaporated before their very eyes,<sup>236/</sup> and it seemed to many that Gianfrancesco had not really made the slightest effort to stop this. This was certainly the judgement of the chronicler Cristoforo da Soldo. Not only did he accuse him of being afraid of the Milanese in his review of the events of 1437,<sup>237/</sup> but he also suggested incompetence at the battle of the Monte della Costa in the Bergamasco on 10 September.<sup>238/</sup> Gianfrancesco's inactivity made Paolo Tron increasingly apprehensive, especially as the fall of Caleppio, which was being besieged by Piccinino



at this time, would put the Veneto itself at risk. On 22 September, Tron sent a critical report regarding Gianfrancesco's actions to the Senate.<sup>239/</sup> By the same token very favourable reports had been reaching Venice about Gattamelata. For instance, on 15 September Chierichino Chierigati wrote very highly about his powers of leadership.<sup>240/</sup> Indeed, Gattamelata did play an important part in the siege of Caleppio.

The news of its capture on 25 September was very upsetting to the Senate, but it also realised that it was important to keep calm in order to make sure that the Bresciano was safe. In their letter to Tron of 29 September there were no open or covert criticisms of Gianfrancesco's behaviour. The Senate promised merely that men and money would be sent immediately to defend the crossings of the Oglio.<sup>241/</sup> In fact the Senate wrote a similar letter to Gianfrancesco on 3 October urging him to give special attention to this "ardua re" as well as calming down any misgivings he might have about its attitude to him.<sup>242/</sup> It may have occurred to him that Carmagnola had also received such assurances from the Senate right up to the time of his arrest.

Judging purely from the results, the events of 1437 could indicate that Gianfrancesco had not lived up to the expectations of the Venetians. After an encouraging start the war had degenerated into piecemeal and directionless engagements which had given the Milanese a valuable opportunity not only to take back the territory which the Venetians had captured, but also to threaten the Oglio boundary. Up to the time when he decided not to renew his condotta in November, Gianfrancesco was to concentrate merely upon defence.

All this was a serious blow to the imperial ambitions of Venice and also a matter of increasing concern for Gianfrancesco himself. Of course, it is not possible to exonerate him totally from blame. On a number of occasions he could have acted more promptly; he could have capitalised rather more upon Piccinino's absence from the scene before June. But it is also the case that the Senate expected rather too much of Gianfrancesco in a relatively short time and that the sometimes bullying insistence of the provveditori was not always backed up by the men, money and supplies which Gianfrancesco judged to be necessary. The Milanese power had been underestimated; Piccinino's army in the Bergamasco was much larger than that of the Venetians. Da Soldo estimated it as "ben 12 millia cavalli e granda fantaria, di quali gli ne era ben quattro millia Savoini a cavallo", <sup>243/</sup> whereas the Venetian army only numbered 8,000 cavalry and a similar number of infantry. Moreover, their reliance upon the participation of Francesco Sforza had been somewhat naïve. There were a number of occasions when the policy of the Senate was not feasible in military terms, in particular the question of the deployment of the troops. It could be argued in the circumstances that the complete fulfilment of the Senate's war policy was impossible for anyone in the time, especially when such a great deal of effort was expended on things like haggling over payment.

It is possible that an awareness of this did not make it as critical of Gianfrancesco's lack of success as it otherwise might have been but this certainly did not have the effect of putting his mind at rest. In almost every respect the parallels between his fortunes and those of Carmagnola had been most marked. Like him Gianfrancesco was increasingly annoyed at the way in which his authority was circumscribed, and the way

in which the Senate seemed to show its favour to Gattamelata perhaps made Venetian assurances even more suspect, he may well have considered that the ingratiating Gattamelata and the Provveditori were beginning to turn against him.<sup>244/</sup> Throughout the war it had seemed that Gattamelata had been going out of his way to play the part of the aggressive warrior, daring, willing to take risks, whereas Gianfrancesco increasingly seemed to adopt a more conservative defensive attitude. Once again we see the inherent differences between a commander and his deputy. It was easy for Gattamelata to suggest more daring projects or to echo the wishes of the Senate or the Provveditori because he did not have the responsibilities of supreme command or ultimate accountability for his actions. Thus he could emerge even from the failure to cross the Adda with increased credit. Judging from the declining relations between Gianfrancesco's aims and those of the Provveditori, it would be reasonable to deduce that Gianfrancesco feared that the Senate was paying more attention to Gattamelata than himself, a point which is substantiated by the impartial Gubbio Chronicler<sup>245/</sup> who mentions disagreements with the Provveditori as the most significant reason for Gianfrancesco leaving Venetian service.

As the campaigning season drew to its close all these things must have been weighing heavily upon his mind. Moreover, from the very outset of the military operations, this desire to thrust across the Adda so close to Milan itself had indicated a degree of aggression which tended to add to his worries. In the first phase of the Lombard Wars the Mantovano had been important not only as a buffer against Milanese expansion but had also been the essential lynchpin in Venice's policy of retaliation. Now the war had developed far beyond this stage. The territorial grants to Gianfrancesco of 1433 reinforced the fact that the Mantovano no longer really fulfilled this role in Venice's eyes.

Gianfrancesco had every right to be worried about what might happen to his state in the event of this policy being successful. Could he possibly suffer the same fate as the Carraresi or the Scaligeri, a fate which his own family had been instrumental in bringing about?

There was one respect in which Gianfrancesco was determined that his career should not parallel that of Carmagnola. It is highly probable that long before the end of October he had resolved that it would be better for him to end his engagement with Venice than have Venice truncate his career in an arbitrary fashion. Even though Platina and Poggio Bracciolini have suggested that the Venetians had hatched a plan to apprehend Gianfrancesco at Brescia at this time,<sup>246/</sup> there is nothing to suggest that Venice ever contemplated treating him in exactly the same way as they had treated Carmagnola. After all there was an essential difference in the fact that Gianfrancesco was a ruler in his own right. Nevertheless, by the end of October he had decided that he no longer wished to continue as Captain General of the Venetian army. After all, not even the Venetians could agree that Gianfrancesco had ever been totally happy in this capacity, he had on a number of occasions gone out of his way to demonstrate this.

Gianfrancesco's subsequent defection to the Milanese has often unjustly coloured the way in which he left Venetian service. Historians have tended to telescope events here in an attempt to accuse him of duplicity. In fact, it is essential to keep these two events as separate as possible even though they are closely related. The one was the inevitable consequence of the other.

The truth of the matter is that Gianfrancesco gave the Venetians plenty of notice of his intention to leave command and in no way is it probable to accuse him of breaking his condotta. It is frequently glossed over that although Gianfrancesco decided not to renew his condotta with Venice when it expired in November 1437 it was not until the following July that he definitively threw in his lot with the Visconti. On the contrary it is arguable that if there was any duplicity, it was rather practised by Venice. It is to a consideration of these matters that the concluding section of this chapter is devoted.

## V

### The Drift towards Milan

By the beginning of October the strain was beginning to tell on Gianfrancesco. Apparently his health once more was none too good and in a letter to the Provveditori the Senate expressed its concern at the way in which his hard work was beginning to affect his physical well-being, hoping that he might be able to moderate his personal activities somewhat provided that adequate provision for security could be made.<sup>247/</sup> This is precisely what Frederico Contarini was doing for the rest of the month as far as Bergamo and the Valcamonica were concerned.<sup>248/</sup> Meanwhile Gianfrancesco himself was involved in renewing defensive truces with Coreggio.<sup>249/</sup> In short, it seemed that the Venetians were managing to hold their own against the Milanese at this time and this was presumably why the Senate could afford to allow Gianfrancesco to relax his efforts.

However about 20 October he broke the news that he was not intending to renew his contract.<sup>250/</sup> This was not totally an unexpected move even as far as Venice was concerned. It had, of course, happened

before, and the Senate hoped to be able, as in the past, to persuade him to re-think his decision; but not this occasion Gianfrancesco would not be moved. It could also be argued that although the Senate did make an effort to persuade him to stay on, it was not quite as insistent as it had been previously.

On 27 October the Senate wrote to Gianfrancesco about his decision. Although there is no copy of his original letter it is clear that he was very upset at the way in which he felt that the provveditori were keeping essential information from him. The Senate tried to allay his fears over this<sup>251/</sup> and assured him of it's continuing goodwill, reminding him how difficult it would be for their army to be left without leadership at this crucial time.<sup>252/</sup> On the same day the Senate instructed Contarini to go and talk to Gianfrancesco about this and copies of his original letters were sent so that he could be more fully informed.<sup>253/</sup>

However, it could be argued that the Venetians were also playing Gianfrancesco false on this occasion. On 4 November the Senate instructed Andrea Morosini, it s ambassador to Francesco Sforza, to broach the subject of offering him the supreme command.<sup>254/</sup> It is important to appreciate that the Senate dangled this bait before Sforza almost at the same time that discussions with Gianfrancesco were being conducted and even before Contarini had had much of a chance to use his powers of persuasion. As early as 6 November Contarini was informed in strict confidence of their approaches to Sforza and the Senate promised to keep him fully informed of all developments in this matter. Meanwhile, Contarini was urged to try his utmost to get Gianfrancesco to reconsider for the time being; but on this occasion there was no instruction to persuade him to stay on

indefinitely. All the Senate now wished to do was to get Contarini to keep Gianfrancesco on until his successor had been appointed. In fact, it said that it was prepared to absolve Gianfrancesco from his responsibilities without any further question and Contarini could assure him that it would be quite content to allow his men to continue in Venetian service even after his departure.<sup>255/</sup> At the same time the Senate was making approaches to Sanseverino.<sup>256/</sup> Meanwhile, arrangements were made for Gattamelata to take over command on a temporary basis.<sup>257/</sup> All this does not indicate that the Venetians were prepared to be as insistent as they had been before. Indeed, there are some definite grounds for Gianfrancesco's suspicions.

In a sense, the very fact that the Senate had not gone out of its way to persuade Gianfrancesco to renew his contract, but was only interested in his staying on until the end of December at the very latest, primarily because negotiations with Sforza ran into the inevitable difficulties, tended to make him even more adamant than ever to go at the end of November and increased his apprehensions.<sup>258/</sup> It seemed to him that the Senate was making things too easy for him and that some devious plan was afoot. Indeed, the Senate was going ahead with provisional arrangements for the splitting up of Gianfrancesco's company as early as 16 November and Contarini was instructed to sort out the men he did not consider to be totally faithful to the Venetian cause.<sup>259/</sup> At the same time Gianfrancesco was once more extremely disturbed about dishonourable rumours which were circulating about him in Venice which did nothing to put his mind at rest in spite of the paternal assurances of the Senate.<sup>260/</sup>

It is not, therefore, surprising that no amount of persuasion by Contarini would move Gianfrancesco and as the end of November was approaching without the question of the Captain Generalship having been settled the Senate, by now thoroughly exasperated and not a little annoyed, decided to send Pietro Loredan to make a final appeal to him.<sup>261/</sup> They were also apprehensive because at this very time there were grave differences of opinion between Gattamelata and Brandolini, his closest associate, which could be dangerous at a time when Gattamelata was emerging as their only hope in maintaining the last vestiges of a continuity of command.<sup>262/</sup>

If we are to believe the story of Da Soldo, not even Loredan could have any effect on Gianfrancesco's decision. At the end of November he went back to Mantua. He left Quinzano "e non volse alozare in terra nessuna né bere né manzare salvo a Prolaino ch'el fece collatione cossì a cavallo..... E in quelli giorni arivò in fina a Sta. Euphemia lo Mag. o messer piero Loredano credendose trovar el ditto Marchese a Bressa. Udito che no'l ge era, subito ritornò in drieto et andò a Asula e trovò a poncto che l'Marchese era montato a cavallo per andar a Mantua, e ge favelo. Quello dicesse non sazo, ma el ditto Marchese gli rispose: "Tornate a casa, messer Piero, perché mi son volto per quella via donde volio andare". E partito da lui, andò a Mantua; e messer Piero ritornò a Venesia"<sup>263/</sup> Gianfrancesco had carried out his promise, and his contract with Venice, to the last letter.

Because of this the Senate had no option but to give the command to Gattamelata because Sforza showed no signs of crossing the Po. Although even now the Venetians had not completely given up the idea of engaging Sforza,



the Senate appointed Gattamelata as 'gubernator' of the army, if only initially on a temporary basis, on 5 December<sup>264/</sup> with a condotta of 400 lances with the addition of those men who had served with Gianfrancesco as 'lancie spezzate'.<sup>265/</sup> In fact, preparations had already been finalised for the splitting up of Gianfrancesco's lances, a process which was to be completed, with the cooperation of Matteo Corrado over the next few months.

The Venetians were rather nervous about keeping Gianfrancesco's company together after his departure. Worried about indiscipline, and possible mutiny, they were most anxious that it should be rapidly split up.<sup>266/</sup> While Contarini was in charge of these operations, the Senate wanted to show its goodwill by consulting fairly closely with Gianfrancesco over this.<sup>267/</sup> In addition to this it was careful to appear to be as generous as possible to certain key men in Gianfrancesco's company, men such as Pietro de Lucca, by offering them condottas in their own right. The process of dividing the men up into 'lancie spezzate' seemed to go quite smoothly and all the essential arrangements had been made by the beginning of February. Most of the men were to go to Gattamelata and the rest were to be divided fairly equally between Sancto Carilia, Pietro de Lucca, Scaramuccio de Lucera, Donino da Parma and Antonio di Martinasco.<sup>268/</sup> This was a matter which naturally interested Gianfrancesco deeply and it is to his credit that he was anxious to make sure that these men were well treated and, moreover, that they should be promptly paid. The whole question of money, particularly the money which the Venetians still owed Gianfrancesco personally, was an equally delicate question because the Senate was not able to afford to pay in full the 10,000 ducats which he was owed. This was a particularly sensitive issue and negotiations were protracted, lasting well into March 1438. Ambrogio Badoer was

entrusted with this difficult matter<sup>269/</sup> but, although the Senate put Gianfrancesco off with assurances of ultimate payment in full, there is no record of anything more than half this sum being paid to him.

As Gianfrancesco was riding back to Mantua after having left the service of Venice he cannot have deluded himself in thinking that his problems were over. He may have been relieved at casting off the heavy burden of command; without that supreme responsibility he could devote himself once more to Mantua. This, however, is where the difficulty lay - how *would* he protect Mantua? There were only two possibilities open to him and even one of these was by now not really viable. He could try to steer an independent course and maintain himself neutral; but the fact that the Mantovano straggled the focal point of the struggle made this a ludicrous impracticability. The uncomfortable fact of life for Mantua still remained as unchanging as ever and no Imperial title could alter it - the only alternative to accepting the protection of a stronger state was absorption.

Up to now the answer to the question 'which state?' had been easy. There had been a tradition of friendship with Venice which had remained largely unbroken. During his own minority the continuance of Gonzaga rule in Mantua was intimately bound up with acceptance and protection by Venice. On the surface this friendship was still as strong as ever at the end of 1437, but, as we have seen thus far in this chapter, in reality it was becoming increasingly fraught with suspicion and what started off as a protective cloak was fast becoming an ominous shadow, a shadow which was to deepen considerably over the next few months. Gianfrancesco had never really been able to shake off the reluctance with which he had taken up his Venetian appointment and he may well have

thought that this was reflected in the results he had achieved in that position. In effect, Gianfrancesco had almost checkmated himself in resigning his command; he felt himself in a position in which to continue or to resign was equally perilous. To continue exposed him to the possibility of Carmagnola's fate, but having resigned and, moreover, having given in to Venice's request that his company should be split up and reallocated, he increasingly came to feel that he was isolated and defenceless. Assailed by such doubts and fears, Gianfrancesco was easy prey to the blandishments of the Visconti. Filippo Maria knew only too well that if Gianfrancesco had really rejected Venice, he could only choose Milan.

"Ello è spietato da Venetiani". This is how Filippo Maria summed up Gianfrancesco's position in a letter which he wrote to Giovanni and Francesco de la Mirandula on 15 December 1437. <sup>270/</sup> It is not clear whether the Duke was referring to the Senate or to public opinion, but however exaggerated this claim might have been, he was confident that he would be able to lure Gianfrancesco to him now. From now on the Visconti was going to make a much more concerted attempt to achieve this. The same letter mentioned that Milanese envoys had already been sent to Mantua in order to probe Gianfrancesco's intentions. These first moves were clearly tentative, but the difficult position in which Gianfrancesco found himself was encouraging to Filippo Maria. He seemed to be fully informed about what had been happening between Gianfrancesco and the Senate. Although Gianfrancesco's reactions were very guarded, he did, however, listen to the envoy. He was also able to report back to his master that from what he had gathered the Mantuan population was very

pleased that Gianfrancesco had given up the Venetian command.<sup>271/</sup>  
 Furthermore he reported that an ambassador from Venice had a short time before been turned away from Mantua without receiving an audience.<sup>272/</sup>  
 Filippo Maria clearly felt that this was a promising basis upon which to work.

The whole period between December and the following July does show an inevitable gravitation towards Milan although there is little indication that Gianfrancesco was very enthusiastic about what he had to do. It was rather the case that, faced with possibly the greatest dilemma of his career, he tried to put off a final decision until the last possible moment. If anything, Gianfrancesco found the Visconti much more difficult to fathom than the Venetian Senate. Even though he was now listening more attentively to Milanese overtures, he fully appreciated that to make the Venetians suspicious at this stage could be supremely dangerous.

For their part, the Venetians continued throughout the winter to reaffirm their friendship with Mantua and to reassure Gianfrancesco that they still held the security of his state very dearly. It was during this period that the Senate used Ambrogio Badoer extensively because it considered that he was the best person to put Gianfrancesco at his ease. Nevertheless he had his work cut out for him on a number of occasions when Gianfrancesco got rather alarmed at the way in which some of the Venetian fortresses in the Bresciano, those along the Mantuan border, were being reinforced.<sup>273/</sup> Badoer constantly urged him to continue in his efforts to secure the Mantovano against enemy incursions and supplied him with up to date information about the protracted negotiations

with Sforza whom they still believed was favourable to their cause.<sup>274/</sup>

While all these assurances were being made by Venice, the Milanese tried to exploit the opening they had made in the previous December. In January and February of 1438 secret negotiations were in progress with Gianfrancesco over the possibility of Bianca Visconti marrying Carlo instead of Sforza. The correspondence which survives for this is not easy to interpret. It had been suggested that this was part of Piccinino's plan to rid himself of a possible rival at the Milanese court<sup>275/</sup> and that it was part of a bluff by Filippo Maria to induce Sforza to join him more quickly,<sup>276/</sup> a theory which seems to be borne out by the fact that Sforza and Visconti signed an agreement less than a month later reconfirming the original marriage agreement.

This was no doubt partly the case, but if it was intended as a ruse, it was a very elaborate one. The negotiations in Mantua conducted by Matteo Corrado and an unnamed 'amico' were taken seriously by Gianfrancesco, especially as Filippo Maria had gone to the trouble of consulting theologians and jurists over the feasibility of absolving him of promises which he had made to Sforza.<sup>277/</sup> Although Gianfrancesco was not interested in these proposals which to him seemed to create rather than solve problems, it could be argued that Filippo Maria intended it as a double-edged ruse to bolster up Gianfrancesco's expectations of the benefits which could accrue from a closer alliance with Milan.

The discussions not only concerned the marriage, but also 'altre cosse' which not only included territories, but also the question of Milanese protection of the Mantovano even if the marriage negotiations

did not prove fruitful.<sup>278/</sup> The Duke was, therefore, keeping all his options open in an attempt to get both Gianfrancesco and Sforza onto his side.

This move seemed, anyhow, to bear some fruit because on 8 March Filippo Maria instructed his councillor Urbano de Iacoppi to open formal, though secret, negotiations with Gianfrancesco for an alliance. These talks were to be exploratory at first but even at this stage Filippo Maria was concerned primarily with his own interests rather than with Gianfrancesco's. In particular he was anxious that these discussions should not compromise his relationship with Piccinino. Filippo Maria was confident of being able to finalise the agreement within the next four months.<sup>279/</sup> Although Este was included in this commission it is clear that it was Gianfrancesco in whom Visconti was most interested.

Although there are no entries in the Ducal registers for this over the next two months, negotiations were taken up again in earnest at the beginning of the following June. It is, however, reasonable to suppose that some discussion was proceeding in the intervening months.

Matters were made somewhat easier for Gianfrancesco by the fact that until the end of May there were no large-scale military operations in Lombardy. The war was going through one of its periodic lulls largely due to the absence of Piccinino, first in Bologna in March 1438, and subsequently in Romagna between Forlì and Ravenna. Piccinino's relationship with the Duke was going through a rather difficult phase because of the way in which the Visconti favoured his rival Sforza.<sup>280/</sup>

This was presumably why Filippo Maria was not anxious to jeopardise his relations with Piccinino in the March negotiations. Gianfrancesco realised that he would eventually have to commit himself categorically to one side when the war was to resume and consequently these months of relative peace meant that he could put off the evil moment for a little longer.

The Venetians were using this time to reassemble their forces and in making provisional plans for the renewal of the war. At the beginning of April Gianfrancesco had deliberately asked the Senate what its intentions were and Badoer had been instructed to reply by assuring him that these plans were intended as much for his safety as for theirs.<sup>281/</sup> At the same time Paolo Trevisan was instructed to collect all the Po fleet together at Borgoforte to prevent the enemy from crossing the Po.<sup>282/</sup> It was this particular development which made Gianfrancesco rather nervous because it involved concentrations of Venetian men in the Mantovano itself and they could become a possible danger if he were to go over to Milan. In addition to this he was also worried about the Senate's motives in making these preparations.

Preparations were being stepped up throughout the month of May and Badoer was consequently heavily involved, not only in reiterating the friendly intentions of the Senate, but also in encouraging Gianfrancesco to make some preparations of his own. He was gradually being forced into the open and from now on the moment of decision was to loom increasingly larger over the horizon.

On 3 May the preparations of the Venetian river fleet were well under way and Gianfrancesco was asked to contribute towards this by arming and refurbishing his own galleys. Moreover, they stated that they were anxious to concentrate some troops on the southern frontiers of the Mantovano to back up the river fleet. In order to convince Gianfrancesco of their goodwill they instructed Badoer to offer a condotta to Carlo Gonzaga, a move which itself could be interpreted in a more sinister way by Gianfrancesco. <sup>283/</sup>

It seemed that the more insistent Venetian assurances became the more concerned Gianfrancesco became and by the beginning of May his apprehension at the possible presence of large numbers of Venetian soldiers in the Mantovano finally prompted him to make the first gesture of protest. There are two significant entries in the Gridario on the 6 and 7 May which were expressly designed to restrict and even prohibit Venetian movements in his territories. <sup>284/</sup>

However, the Venetians were not deterred even by this and they continued to negotiate with Gianfrancesco over military preparations. However, from now on they were more demanding and increasingly insistent on a much more definite commitment from Gianfrancesco. This was especially the case at the end of the month when tensions in Lombardy were once more beginning to mount and Piccinino's arrival was imminent.

The Senate, despite a constant stream of advice through Badoer, could not get any definite statement of intent from Gianfrancesco. On 20 May it made an abortive attempt to induce him to sign another condotta <sup>285/</sup>



but was forced in the end to raise Gattamelata's condotta to 500 lances and discussed formally investing him with the title of Captain General<sup>286/</sup> a proposal which, at this stage, was defeated.

By 26 May the level of diplomatic and military activity was reaching fever pitch. The Senate had heard that a large Milanese fleet was being prepared and, hearing that Piccinino was now on the move, began to express not only anger, but surprise at the way in which Gianfrancesco was refusing to act. The Senate begged him to close all passes to Piccinino<sup>287/</sup> and three days later it warned him how crucial his state could be to Venice's success, painting in no uncertain terms the grave danger in which he could find himself.<sup>288/</sup>

Gianfrancesco needed no reminding that the game he was playing was very dangerous indeed. he realised full well the dangers he could face if the insistence and anger which was beginning to build up in Venice was not matched by more concrete assurances from Milan. The crucial month in this respect was June when Gianfrancesco was faced with the unenviable task of remaining non-committal with Venice at the same time as Milanese negotiations were clarifying themselves into definite proposals.

On 8 June Filippo Maria issued instructions to his secretary Maffeo de Muzano to obtain Gianfrancesco's military services as quickly as possible and he was authorised to negotiate with him over the territories which he might want in return for his services. The Duke was very astute in pinpointing the core of the problem. Provided that the territorial inducements were sufficiently attractive he was convinced that this would finally clinch matters.<sup>289/</sup> It was plainly apparent to him that Gianfrancesco was getting frightened of the Venetians by this time.

This was clear from the actual negotiations themselves.

Apart from the territorial discussions the question of Milanese protection was very high on the agenda. On 26 June Muzano was given specific instructions that Filippo Maria would guarantee not only the safety of Gianfrancesco and his family, but also the absolute integrity of his state, particular emphasis being given to those areas which had been the subject of controversy with Milan and which would be secured by a formal ducal investiture.<sup>290/</sup>

The Visconti also undertook to reward Gianfrancesco with other territories which he either possessed or was to acquire in Milanese service in Verona and Vicenza.<sup>291/</sup> These promises, although vague at this stage, were very agreeable inducements to obtain the military services of Gianfrancesco and Carlo, and formed a useful basis upon which the final agreement of 4 July could be built. The main details were as follows. If Gianfrancesco should conquer Verona or Vicenza or both he would be awarded them with the exception of certain territories which had belonged to Alvise dal Verme and were to be returned to him. Furthermore, if Gianfrancesco were to acquire either Brescia or Bergamo, he was to retain whichever was captured first until he had received Verona, after which the city would be restored to Filippo Maria. If none of these cities had been conquered by the end of the war, Filippo Maria promised to invest Gianfrancesco with Cremona and the Cremonese, with the exception of Pizzighettone.

As soon as Gianfrancesco definitely entered the war against the Venetians, the Duke undertook to send Alvise dal Verme and his company into the Mantovano in order to guarantee further protection and he would be under Gianfrancesco's command in the absence of Piccinino.

Both Gianfrancesco and Carlo were assigned troops by Filippo Maria under the same conditions as the other ducal condottieri. Finally, this treaty, which was to last ten years, was to guarantee the security of Gianfrancesco's territories and those of his named allies, but Filippo Maria also promised not to sign a peace with any power which had in its possession any territory captured from Mantua.<sup>292/</sup> The terms of the agreement seemed on the surface to be much more generous than the Venetians had ever offered. The four cities mentioned in the negotiations were indeed great prizes and Verona or Vicenza certainly seemed to point towards a considerable enlargement of the Mantuan state. In reality, however, this agreement was to cause a number of complications which became apparent only after Gianfrancesco had openly thrown in his lot with the Visconti. As he was to find out, Filippo Maria was very good at promises. This will become strikingly apparent in the next chapter.

Gianfrancesco appreciated the great gamble he was taking in accepting this agreement, but by now his fears of Venice ran deep. He must have realised that now Mantua would not merely be in the front line of warfare again, but in a sense it would be the focal point of the conflict once the Venetians discovered his intentions. The promise of Verona or Vicenza was very alluring, but the prize would only be won with the utmost difficulty.

The later part of June, therefore, was a period of almost unbearable stress for Gianfrancesco. The negotiations with Milan had been very secret indeed, but the growing anger and frustration of the Venetian Senate as this crucial month drew to its close may well have led him to believe that they had some inkling of what was afoot.

During this time both Ambrogio Badoer and Andrea Morosini were pressing him to declare his intentions. It was becoming clearer that Piccinino was aiming at Casalmaggiore and Gianfrancesco was warned time and time again of the havoc that the Viscontean army could cause to corn and other crops in the Serraglio.<sup>293/</sup> He was urged to cooperate with Gattamelata and give every support to the river fleet which was ready to sail in defence of the Mantovano. By 21 and 22 June there are not only hints of desperation in the instructions to the Venetian envoys, there is now a greater degree of impatience. Gianfrancesco was warned that his dilatoriness could work to the detriment of Mantua and the Venetian cause,<sup>294/</sup> but their assurances of the greater strength of the Venetian army and their assurances that they would fight to their utmost to defend the Mantovano had absolutely no effect.

Gianfrancesco by now had passed the point of no return. Even if he were to break his silence and declare himself for Venice he could not undo the damage which he had now felt to be done to the Venetian alliance. After all the rumours that had been spreading about him in Venice and the growing distrust with Gattamelata and the provveditori, he could never again trust their intentions. In fact, there is a hint that the Senate itself was beginning more openly to doubt Gianfrancesco's fidelity at this time.

After literally months of agonising, the arrival of Piccinino signalled that the moment of decision had finally come. It was obvious, nevertheless, that Gianfrancesco was not going to make any decisive move until he could be sure of adequate protection by the Milanese.

By the end of June Piccinino finally arrived at Casalmaggiore with a large army. The actual number of men is unspecified but Da Soldo indicated that it was larger than the Venetian force.<sup>295/</sup> On 29 June Casalmaggiore fell and the Oglio border was in grave danger.<sup>296/</sup> The Senate considered that Piccinino would attempt to cross the river somewhere between Marcaria and Bocca d'Oglio and moreover concluded that unless some resistance was put up by Gianfrancesco, it would be a very easy thing to accomplish with the backing of a river fleet.<sup>297/</sup>

On 1 July Piccinino started building a bridge across the Oglio. The Senate was untiring in its efforts but was by now accusing Gianfrancesco of causing confusion among the friends of Venice, and of giving the enemy a valuable opportunity to take the initiative.<sup>298/</sup> They wanted to send Gattamelata personally to consult and act in concert with Gianfrancesco at this moment of crisis. Badoer was in constant attendance in Mantua to relay the slightest change in the situation.

However, on 2 July Gianfrancesco allowed Piccinino to cross. This is how Da Soldo described the events:

"El mercoledì, che fu adì 2 de luio, in nostro mal poncto de noi Bressani, lo ditto Marchese dete lo passo a Niccolò Picenino in tre logi perché più tosto passasse: in bocca d'Ollio passorno com ponte de navi; a Marcharia passorno per il ponte proprio, e passorno a Canedo. Ma Dio volse che in quello puncto che i deseua passare fu preso de la de Ollio per i nostri fanti uno traditore de la Signoria, chiamato el Bereta, el qual per scampar la forza avisò Gattamelata che se non si levava da lì che lui era preso com tutta la gente, avisandolo che lo Marchese ge dava lo passo. E ditte le parolle, li messi furno li digando: "Ogni homo cammini che li inimici sonno passati"."

Gattamelata and his army managed to retire to Brescia although they were sorely pressed by the pursuing Milanese force.<sup>300/</sup>

Even though this action, or lack of it, by Gianfrancesco gave a clear indication of the way in which he was moving, the Venetians were still unwilling to accept this. Up to the point when he openly joined Piccinino on 13 July they still persisted. On 7 for instance, Badoer was instructed to offer Gianfrancesco Cremona and Crema if he would only publicly show himself well disposed to them.<sup>301/</sup> Even as late as 9 July the Senate was writing to Gattamelata in Brescia that it could not believe ill of Gianfrancesco.<sup>302/</sup>

However, on that very day Maffeo de Muzano was instructed to put the final touches to the terms of the agreement and to invest Gianfrancesco with the territories as specified in the agreement of 26 June.<sup>303/</sup> There was no holding back now because Filippo Maria expected Gianfrancesco to join Piccinino at the earliest opportunity.

In a letter to Niccolò d'Este on 14 July the Senate wrote very bitterly of Gianfrancesco's unexpected defection. After everything the Venetian state had done for him his perfidy was unforgivable.<sup>304/</sup> On the same day they sent a similar letter to Ermolao Donato to inform Eugenius IV of what had happened indicating that they were preparing a strong river fleet in order to take the offensive against the enemy in a very short time.<sup>305/</sup> Venetian anger and surprise at Gianfrancesco's actions was quickly turned to thoughts of revenge, but even now they still wished to keep the door open to further negotiations, perhaps through the mediation of Leonello d'Este, Gianfrancesco's son-in-law.<sup>306/</sup>

"É ben detto quel proverbio antico: Disappicca<sup>307/</sup>  
l'appicato, ch'egli appiccherà poi te."

Sanuto applied this proverb to Gianfrancesco's actions. In a violent denunciation he reviewed all the benefits which Venetian protection had obtained for Mantua and especially the opportunities which they had given to Gianfrancesco himself:

".... fu cercato d'esaltarlo dopo la morte del Conte Carmagnuola, quando il fece Capitan Generale, come buon figlio nostro, dandogli ogni plenaria libertà. Nel quale ufizio é stato molti anni, e ha imborsato grandissima quantità di danari, e poco utile ci fece."

These charges, however, are far too extreme. In surveying the years in which Gianfrancesco Gonzaga was Captain General of Venice it can be argued that he was a victim as well as a beneficiary in his relationship with Venice. In almost every respect it was Venice that sought to mould Gianfrancesco to its wishes, capitalising upon the knowledge that Mantua needed a protector. Taking on command very much against his better judgement, he had assumed responsibilities which had proved increasingly incompatible with what he had felt to be in Mantua's best interests. Nevertheless in trying to carry out Venice's policy he felt he had been restricted by those very problems which had caused the eventual downfall of Carmagnola. As the war began to go badly for Venice Gianfrancesco's suspicions and apprehensions about his own fate finally convinced him that to resign would be the best possible course to take.

Gianfrancesco's handling of his resignation was perfectly proper, in no respect did he break the articles of his agreement. On the contrary,

he had done his utmost to be as open with the Senate as possible; but it refused to accept this and excessive insistence in the final months of this period only served to exacerbate the intense dilemma which Gianfrancesco had to face at this time.

After he had resigned Gianfrancesco had technically become a free agent, but because of the political conditions which existed in Lombardy at this time, in reality he was only free to choose which state would protect Mantua. In a sense it did not matter whether Venice intended to dispose of Gianfrancesco or not; the crucial question was that Gianfrancesco felt himself to be threatened. It is probably true that the Venetians genuinely wanted to keep Gianfrancesco and was convinced that he would remain faithful to them, but the reasons were largely selfish now. In their policy of expansion across the Lombard plain the Mantovano was just as important as ever, but the extent of Venetian ambitions had now become much more alarming and they had not appreciated what an effect this could have on the ruler of a state of Mantua's size.

The result of this was that he was virtually forced to listen more attentively to the Milanese and even here Gianfrancesco could not be sure. The territorial promises were attractive and Piccinino's record in Visconti service had been good. Moreover the fortunes of war in 1438 seemed to rest with the Milanese side. However, Filippo Maria himself was an unknown quantity and Gianfrancesco had to be sure that the aid which he had promised materialised before he made any definite move; hence the tension of the final months. It was Piccinino's presence on the banks of the Oglio which swing the balance in favour of Milan.



The decision to join Milan was, therefore, not reached without an immense amount of deliberation and, as always, the first priority was Mantua and its protection. Consequently, Gianfrancesco's act cannot go down as one of perfidy. Many condottieri had done much worse than he. On the contrary it must be argued that he was true to his state, which was the higher loyalty. Such decisions were inevitable if Mantua was "un vaso di terracotta costretto a viaggiare con vasi di ferro". In making the decision, the best that can be said is that he acted with the highest principles in mind. He fully appreciated that the risks were high and, with the wrath of Venice about to fall upon his head, he could only hope and pray that he had made the right decision.

CHAPTER 4THE RELUCTANT COMMANDER (1432-1438)Notes

1. Sanuto, col.1116.
2. e.g. Treccani, (Br.), pp.46-7.
3. See above, p.232ff.
4. S.S. reg.12, fol.84, 8 April 1432. Their instructions were "de conducendo eum in Capitaneatum nostrum generalem" and they were also asked to hear his views "et cum eo quod habebitur veniantur ad istud concilium."
5. S.S. reg. 12, fol.84: "Dicimus quod nobis placet quod det ipsi Domini Regi ipsam summam denariorum per rebus quas dicit et certi reddimur quod ei dabit quam minorem summam denariorum poterit."
6. Ibid., fol.85t, 10 April 1432.
7. S.S. reg.12, fol.85t: "cum multis amicabilis et paternis verbis".
8. S.S. reg. 12, fol.85t: ".... quod per inconvalescentiam persone sue ipse non videt quod aliquo modo acceptare possit, nec facere voluntatem nostrum.
9. Ibid. Gianfrancesco "se offert" to go to Brescia "per honore statui nostri, et stare illic per illud tempus donec n.rum d.num provident de uno ad gubernationem gentium nostrorum.... rogans n.rum. d.num quod sit stare suum ibi pro minori tempore quo esse possit....."
10. Ibid. He was offered a condo-tta of 50 lances. For text see Arch.Gon. B. 51, 12 April 1432.
11. S.S.reg.12, fol.92, 9 May 1432. "sine aliqua provisione ul. stipendio". Because of this the Venetians gave to him four of Carmagnola's horses - Principe, Tollentinus, Pavano and Forte.
12. S.S. reg. 12, fol.86, 14 April 1432: ".... sicut faceret si esset Capitan. Generalis..."
13. Although the rectors in Brescia were prepared to take on those of Carmagnola's men who still wished to serve, the Senate were clearly very wary of this. S.S. reg.12, fol.86, they state "quanto minor fieri poterit" and even then they are to serve as lancia spezzate. All this was to be supervised by Marco Dandolo. This was very reminiscent of what was to happen to Gianfrancesco's men in 1438.

14. Arch.Gon. B. 428 (Imperial letters), fol.119 ".... Audivimus qualiter Veneti hostes nostri apud fidelitatem tuam multam instant ut officium Capitaneatum earum velis assumere...."
15. Arch.Gon. B. 428, fol.120, 14 April 1432.
16. A.S.M. Carteggio Visconteo. Extra Dominium, Cart.13, fol.16, 17 April 1432. (Filippo Maria to Corrado de Carreto). Since, he argues, it was Sigismund's intention after returning from Rome "personaliter militare contra inimicos et rebellas suas", and, if Gianfrancesco accepted the Venetian offer, it would "ageret contra honorem suam", this could be seen as hinting that it might be in Gianfrancesco's interests to join the Emperor. This is much more clearly stated in a further letter in Cart.13, fol.30 for the 29 April.
17. A.S.M. Carteggio Visconteo. Extra Dominium, Cart.13, fol.26, 26 April.1432. (Filippo Maria to Corrado): "Nobis videtur et summe laudamur quod ipse D.nr, Rex prefati Domini Mantuam fidelitatem acceptet...."
18. A.S.M. Cart. Visc. Extra Dominium, Cart.13, fol.30, 29 April 1432. (Filippo Maria to Sigismund): ".... nam et ipse dns. (Gianfrancesco) summus prudentie et magni animi.... fide clarissime." Filippo Maria suggested that Gianfrancesco should be "in partibus Italie constituere capitaneatum generalem imperii atque insignarie et ornare per terre quas tenet..... vel marchionatus vel alterius tituli dignitate valuerit..."
19. Simone da Crema was Gianfrancesco's ambassador over this. Filippo Maria had no objection to the Imperial title but he was very insistent to Sigismund through Corrado, after he had been shown documents relating to Gianfrancesco's Imperial privilege, that there should be no disputed territories included (presumably those which had originally belonged to Filippo Maria and were lost in the war.) See A.S.M., Cart. Visc. Extra Dominium, Cart. 13, fol. 28, 27 April 1432. (Filippo Maria to Corrado).
20. This view was put forward in an unpublished M.Phil thesis in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, R.E.G.Smith "Filippo Maria Visconti and his Condottieri (1953), p.92, also p.34.
21. S.S. reg. 12, fol.88, 23 April 1432 ; "ei dici fecit (Sigismund) qualiter sensit eum acceptare capitaneatum gentiumstrarum, et quod si hoc non fecit, non debeat acceptare, et si acceptavit q. debeat renuntiare, ne incurrat in privationem vicariatus et iurium Imperii sicut in litteris sibi scripsit clarius continet." The Venetians were asked if they would "providere per modum q. non remaneat exclusus et privatus iuribus suis."
22. S.S. reg.12, fol.88t.
23. See Treccani, (Mi). p.287. "... ciascuno si era illuso di sfruttare l'altro".
24. Arch. Gon. B. 2185. (Chancery Minutes), 30 April 1432. (Gianfrancesco to the Cardinal of Santa Croce). The Venetian ambassadors were in Sigismund's presence in Parma. "ad cui. presentiam in locis ipsis multa undique concurrerunt ambasiatores pluriorum, dominorum..." The Venetians "querit facere ligam cum Illo. ducali dnio. V. enetiarum et cum Mag.cia. civitate Florentie." There had been negotiations between Sigismund and Venice in

- February 1432 over the question of the relocation of the Council of Basle in Mantua; but this did not come to anything. See Arch.Vz. S.S. vol. 12, fols 66 & 66t. The whole issue was raised again at the end of May 1432, but on this occasion the Venetians were not at all keen for this to happen because of the war. See also S.S. reg.12, fol.94t. 27 May 1432.
25. Arch. Gon. B. 85, fasc. 14 (Imperial Investitures) fols. 1 & 2. Also B.5 nos. 6 to 9. Once again there is a glaring error in Coniglio, Storia di Mantova, op.cit., pp.450-451. He states that the Marquisate was granted in May 1433 and not in 1432. Although the ceremony did take place in September 1433, Coniglio offers no explanation of the reasons behind the apparent delay.
  26. Arch. Gon. B. 1419, fol.50, 6 May 1432.
  27. Arch. Gon. B. 85, fasc. 14, fol. 2t and B.5, no.11.
  28. Arch. Gon. B. 85, fasc. 14, fol. 2t. This was also reconfirmed on the day of the ceremony on the 22 September 1433. Arch. Gon. B.5, no.12. This was to have some very interesting repercussions as far as Gianfrancesco's will was concerned.
  29. Judging from a letter sent by Venice to Gianfrancesco contratulating him on the finalisation of matters. Arch. Gon. B. 1419, fol.51, 14 May 1432.
  30. The actual date of Gianfrancesco's arrival in Brescia is not completely certain. Treccani (Br.), p.36, states 21 April, but the first reference in S.S. reg.12 for his presence in Brescia is 6 May (fol.91t).
  31. Sanuto, col.1030.
  32. S.S. reg.12, fol.91t, 9 May 1432.
  33. Ibid. "Et quantum factum armigerarum sicut scitis. nos. habemus ad solutionem veram equos ultra 10,000." They are hoping to send another 4,000 cavalry and 4,000 infantry from the March and Romagna as quickly as possible.
  34. cf. Arch. Gon. B.1419, fol.50, 6 May 1432: "Mandamus rectoribus pro subventionibus gentibus nris. dandis..."
  35. Sanuto, col.1029: "Agli 8 del detto mese giunse in questa terra il Marchese di Monferrato Venuto per visitare questa Signoria, e dimandarle soccorso contro il Duca di Milano."
  36. S.S. reg. 12, fol.97, 1 June 1432 "... et audita requisitione sua quamquam defectu inconvelescentia sue non poterat se exercere et servire nobis sicut velet, quod nos gravat... et tamen quod est contentus exire in castru et servire nro. dmo. per totus mensis Junii fut..."
  37. S.S. reg.12, fol.97: "... dicimus q. optantes salutem sue persone, fuimus contenti de eo quod sibi placet." This was passed by 114 votes to 13 with 7 abstentions.

38. S.S. reg.12, fols. 97, 97t & 98, 7 June 1432.
39. Ibid. "Tamquam persona magis practica et que melius scit et cognoscet conductorem illarum partium."
40. Ibid.
41. S.S. reg. 12, fol.99, 14 June 1432. The Senate informed Gianfrancesco that their intelligence indicated that the Milanese were less well fortified in this area than they had previously imagined. There had been very little written on this part of the Lombard Wars; see Treccani (mi). pp.287ff and Sanuto, col.1030. Also Treccani (Br.) pp.36ff for general indications.
42. S.S. reg.12, fol.99.
43. Much of the correspondence for this period deals with Gianfrancesco's constant requests for reinforcements and it would be tedious to discuss these in detail. For example, on 14 June (S.S. reg.12, fol.99) Gianfrancesco required 1500 'cernide' from the Bresciano together with 200 'guastatori' and 150 oars. This is a fairly typical request. On another occasion (S.S. reg.12, fol.102t. 23 June 1432) he "scripserat nris. solutoribus exercitus ut ullo nr. vadant ad exercitum nisi secu. ferrant denarios." The sum involved here was 25,000 ducats for corn and other supplies as well as pay.
44. S.S. reg.12, fol.99t. The Senate only approved of a scorched earth policy where it might hit the Milanese hardest.
45. S.S. reg.12, fol.101t, 21 June 1432. Four deputies or "mareschalchi" were also considered: Lorenzo da Cotignola, Orsino Orsini, Alvise dal Verme and Taliano Furlano (@ 100d. per month).
46. S.S. reg.12, fol.105t. 8 July 1432: "Audivimus ex litteris provisores nostri quanta prudentia et virilitate quantoque bono ordine noster exercitus ducitus..."
47. S.S. reg.12, fol.111, 24 July (Letter to the Provveditori): ".... nec potuissimus audire rem que nobis magis placet." There is a reference in this entry which refers to his usefulness in an advisory capacity during his stay in Mantua which would point to his presence in Mantua during the earlier part of the month.
48. Ibid.
49. S.S. reg.12, fol.115t. 5 August 1432: "paterne et cordialiter rogamus eius M.qm.pro nra. precipua complacentia velit quanto cicius sit possibile personaliter ire et stare ad exercitum nostrum.... et cum his et allis verbis et persuasionibus que tibi videbuntur ad propositum pertinere procurabis inducere ipsum ad superscriptum nram. intentionem."
50. A.S.M. Cart. Visc. Extra Dominium, cart. 13, fols. 51, 51t, 4 August 1432. See also Osio, vol. III, part 1, no. CIX.
51. Ibid: "Exercitus meus, principe Serenissime, non appropinquat hostili, neque posset hostili resistere potentiori, ut dixi, et fortiori, meliusque pasato."

52. Ibid: "Quo veniente, confido non solum damna predicta restaurare, sed gravius hostes ipsos opprimere; eis maxime non habentibus Capitaneum Generalem, ut solebant, nec illustrissimum Marchionem Mantue in locum tenentem earum, sicut habuere diebus elapsis, qui Mantuam nuper rediit, et, ut paucis multa perstringam, si cito venent subsidium Hungarorum, res omnes bene procedent."
53. Osio, vol.III, pt. 1, p.92, no.CXI: "Quod nisi cito fiat, video in ruinam ire omnia et sine remedio, maxime in partibus ultra Abduam."
54. S.S. reg.12, fol.123, 28 August 1432. (Senate to Provveditori): "... dicimus q. cum nra. desideria esset habilitandi nos ad habendum passum super Abduam..." They instructed the Provveditori to draw up plans to this effect. This was why Gianfrancesco's presence was so essential by the end of August.
55. Treccani (Mi), p.288; Treccani (Br.)p.36ff. Also Sanuto, col.1031.
56. E.Besta, "Venezia e la Valcamonica nel secolo XV", A.S.I 128, pp.118ff. See also Sanuto cols. 1031 and 1032 for these events which mainly took place in November. Also Treccani (Br.) p. 36.
57. S.S. reg.12, fol.126, 9 September 1432: "qm. gentes nras. stent in qm. diutius sit possibile." The army was to be kept up to full strength so as not to allow the enemy to make any headway. On Giuliano, see S.Troilo, "Andrea Giuliano: politico e. letterato Veneziano del Quattrocento" in Biblioteca dell'Archivum Romanicum, ser.1 XVI-XVIII. 1931-32.
58. Sanuto, col.1031: "Il Marchese di Ferrara in questo tempo mandò molti messi alla Signoria pregandola, che volesse venire alla pace col Duca di Milano, e voleva essere egli mediatore... e andò a Ferrara etiam il Marchese di Mantova". In fact there is evidence that Michiel was in Ferrara as early as 8 October (ARCh.Gon. B.1228). He was already in touch with Gianfrancesco. See Osio, Vol.3, Pt.1. Nos. CXVI & CXVII: "et absunt ex captis plures ductores virique notabilis".
59. See Osio vol.3, pt.1, Nos. CXVI & CXVII: "...et absunt ex captis plures ductores virique notabilis."
60. S.S.reg. 12, fol. 137t. 13 November 1432. The general basis for discussion was a salary of 2,000 ducats per month plus 500 lances (in which Ludovico was included) and also a share of the spoils.
61. S.S. reg.12, fol.140t. "et si pedites valuerit cum peditibus ducentis q. si locas Guastalle et la Mirandule pervenit ad manus nr. Dni., ea cum territoriis et districtibus suis illustri Mag.cie. sue libere dabimus".
62. Sanuto, col.1032: "In questo giorno giunse in questa terra il Signore Marchese di Mantova Capitano Generale nostro, e gli fu fatto grande onore, e fattigli presenti di vino, di cere, e di confezioni. E poi gli fu dato il bastone di Capitano Generale da Messer lo Doge."
63. S.S. reg.12, fol.140t. As far as money for the raising of men was concerned, the Senate was particularly obliging: "Et si ipse dns. Marchio aliquid tibi (Badoer) diceret de facto pres-tancie per gentibus quas de novo conducere debet, debeas sibi dicere q. provedebimus sibi dari facere per cameram nram. Verone singulo mensis, usque ad menses tres, ducat. 5,000 ei procurabis qm. de hoc contentus sit..."

64. S.S. reg. 12, fol. 144t, 3 December 1432. Foscari to Badoer.
65. Ibid., fol. 146t. 11 December 1432.
66. Ibid. fol 153, 29 December 1432.
67. S.S. reg.12, fol. 155, 13 Jan.1433: "ut melius dicti doctores nobis consulere possint circa materiam predictam."
68. S.S. reg.12, fol.156, 19 Jan.1433: "Qm. ultra Padum non requirit nec vult aliud qm. Guastallam et Mirandulam si aquirentur... et citra Padum vult habere Caravagium, Trivulium, Vallate Rivoltam et Bregnanum si aquirentur."
69. S.S. reg.12, fol.162t. 13 Jan.1433 and Arch. Gon. B. 43 (Treaties), fol.188t.
70. Arch. Gon. B.1181 (Ferrara), 11 Feb.1432. (Este to Gianfrancesco): ".... dux Mediolani vult mittere exercitum suum contra Casalmaiori.." In fact, from March 1432 Gianfrancesco was beginning to concentrate once again on the security of the Serraglio. On 18 March there was a 'grido' forbidding "ponte alcuno atraverso del Seraglio de Mantoa" without express permission (Arch. Gon. B.2038, fasc.3).
71. Arch. Gon. B.1419, fol.53, 30 Oct.1432. This document is very mutilated indeed. In fact there was a very active correspondence between Este and Gianfrancesco at the time. e.g. B.1228, 6 & 8 Oct.1432.
72. Arch. Gon. B. 2390 (Lettere dai Paesi), fol. 41, 8 July 1432 (Hermann Hecht to Gianfrancesco): " ... super hac re multu. grosse locutus est.... nobis placet in hac.... libenter laborare et partes sue interponere ad honorem, exaltationem et utilitatem domus vre..." Sigismund had also instructed Hecht to convey his regrets that Gianfrancesco's in-vestiture had not taken place yet.
73. Also in February 1433 (S.S. reg.12, fol.163, 5 Feb.1433). This promise was reiterated at a point when Sigismund was much more openly gravitating towards Venice and the Pope.
74. In fact, on 6 December 1432 the Senate decided to show its goodwill by sending more 'balestrieri' to Casalmaggiore (S.S.reg.12,fol.145t)
75. e.g. see Treccani (Mi), pp.291-294.
76. See Treccani (Br.) pp.37ff.
77. See Treccani (Br.) p.37. Gianfrancesco had stayed at the Convents of S.Francesco and S. Giovanni before the award. For the referma see Arch.Gon. B.43, fols.189-190: "..... item, q. in Brixia dentur et assignatur domus ubi habiliter possit habitare idem capitaneus cum tota eius familia...." His condotta was for 600 lances, 300 infantry, a provision of 2,000 ducats per month as before. See also Predelli, Libro commemorativo della Repubblica di Venezia, in Monumenti storici pubblicati della R. deputazione Veneta di storia patria, ser.1 (Venice,1876). vol. 4. for 12 March and 7 July 1433.

78. E.g. see S.S. reg.12, fol.169t. 28 Feb.1433. San Severino was consulting with Gianfrancesco "pro provisionibus fiendis circa recuperationem locorum planiter pergamentis ammissorum."
79. S.S. reg. 12, fol.179t. 2 April 1433: "ita quod circa Abdum paucissime gentes remanserunt."
80. The details were solemnly published on 10 May. See Osio, vol.iii, pt.1. No.CXXII. The other provisions of the peace may be summarised as follows:
  1. Milan was to return Monferrat, including Casole.
  2. Independence of Lucca, Siena, Piombino, Campofregoso.
  3. Florence no longer to interfere in Lombardy, Genoa or any other Viscontean property.
81. Osio, vol.iii, pt.1., no. CXXIII.
82. See Laurentii Buonincontri, "Annales", in R.I.S. vol. xxi, co..140.
83. For details see Deutsche Reichstagakten, op.cit., vol. X, p.802. no.481. The financial details were that the Pope and Florence would furnish him with 100 florins per day plus a loan of 10,000 florins. There was some haggling over the final amount but in the end Eugenius IV bought Sigismund off by a monthly payment of 5,000 florins. See also Deutsche Reichstagakten, vol. X, p. 822, nos.487-488.
84. S.S. reg.13, fol. 1t, 1 Sept.1433: "pro dando biretum Marchionatus."
85. There are many chronicle sources describing this. One of the less well known describes the visit in the following terms: "1433, Nel detto millesimo del mese d'Agosto l'Imperatore si parti da Roma e venne a Ravenna, a Ferrara et da Ferrara a Mantova entrò a di 20 di Settembre e fu li fatto grandissimo honore e detto imperatore donò le insegne del Marchesato al signore Giovanni Francesco e fece cavaliere tri sui figlioli, cioè Ludovico, Carolo et Allessandro e stete a Mantova 8 giorni..." From an anonymous chronicle of Mantua from its origins to 1495. This is an unpublished Mss. in the Biblioteca Comunale in Mantua, ref.no.1022. See also Platina, pp.328-329. Equicola, p.150, Possevino, pp.539-541.
86. Amadei, Cronaca Universale, op.cit., vol. 2, p.8. See also Archivio de Stato, Mantua. D'Arco collection no. 96; Paolo Fioretta, Vita dei primi 13 Gonzaga che tennero dominio in Mantova (MSS.) fols.49-50.
87. Arch. Gon. B.197 (Marriages and Inheritances), fol.179.
88. Ibid., "... audio a fidedignus predicta puella esse formosissiman et optimorum mororum etatis XIII annorum." Apparently Coniglio (I Gonzaga p.52) suggested that Barbara was rather ugly; though there is no evidence to suggest this was so. There are two very sound studies of Barbara: Paul Kristeller, "Barbara von Brandenburg, Markgräfin von Mantua", Hohenzollern Jahrbuch, III (1899); see especially p.66. Also Bernard Hofmann, "Barbara von Hohenzollern, Markgräfin von Mantua. Ein Lebensbild aus dem XV Jahrhundert", Jahresbericht des Historische Vereins für Mittelfranken XLI (1881). There is also a discussion of this point in a thesis by E.W.Mahnke, The Political Career of a Condottiere Prince Ludovico Gonzaga 1444-1466. (Cambridge, Massachusetts 1974), p.36. She states "German historians are eloquent in describing the gulf Barbara had to cross in passing from the culture of the Empire to that of an Italian Renaissance state..."



89. Arch. Gon. B.197. fols.190-191 (An undated copy of the marriage settlement). The signatories were the Cardinal of S.Angelo, the Bishop of Mantua and Frederick of Brandenburg: ".... q. prefatus dns. Marchio Mantuam et dns. Ludovicus euis fillius, non desiderantes ex causa dicti matrimonii bona aliqua temporalia aut dotam seu donationem, sed potius amicitia benevolentiam et affinitatem dictam dominam Barbaram dotare volunt, et eidem domine Barbarae ratione dotis donare et largiri 25,000 fl...." Furthermore the money was to be deposited in Venice before the feast of All Saints (1st November). See also Sanuto (col.1033), who states 3,000 ducats.
90. Arch. Gon. B.197, fol.179, 6 July 1433. Frederick also required an interpreter to be provided for Barbara. The Cardinal respectfully suggested that Ludovico should take great pains to appear at this best in going to meet his prospective bride. On 29 November he also gave Ludovico and Barbara the castles of Ostiglia and Peschiera (Arch. Gon. B.197, fols. 180 and 181t).
91. Sanuto (col.1033) merely states the month of November. Other chroniclers mention dates between 12 and 22 November (See Amadei Cronaca Universale vol.2, p.16.)
92. Arch. Gon. B.197, fol.176.
93. Arch. Gon. B.197, fols.177-178.
94. Anonymous chron. in the Bibl.Com. in Mantua, op.cit., fol.16.
95. S.S. reg.12, fol.203t, 21 Aug.1433: "sunt homines probissimi et magni pretii..."
96. S.S. reg. fol.3, 11 Sept.1433.
97. Ibid., fol. 6t, 18 Sept.1433.
98. S.S. reg.12. fol.188, 4 June 1433. On 29 July the S.S. records of a breakdown of the army among the various condottieri: Gianfrancesco 1200, Guidantonio Manfredi, 800, San Severino 800, Petrogianpaolo Orsini 600, dal Verme 600, Taliano Furlano 400, Taddeo Marchese 200, Martinengo 200. (vol.12, fol.197t).
99. S.S. reg.13, fols. 6t & 8 18 and 26 Sept.1433.
100. Ibid., fols. 28t and 29, 3 and 7 December 1433. San Severino wanted 50 more lances and on this occasion the Senate had to agree.
101. S.S. reg.13, fol.18t, 2 Nov.1433.
102. Antonello had been a troublesome condottiere and seemed to oscillate between Milan and Venice. See Smith, op.cit., p.77 & Osio, vol.iii,pt.1, pp.65-6.
103. S.S. reg.13, fol.33, 8 Dec.1433: "sumus male in concordio cum conductoribus nostris et nisi presto provideatur fortasse eveniat, quod Deus avertat, de rebus non placandis nr. Dnio..."

104. S.S. reg.13, fol.33: "super negotiis dictorum conductorum et providere in omnibus et singulis rebus qm. ipse conductores remaneant contenti ipsorum conductorum de ipsis firmis et refirmis..." The people most closely concerned here were Martinengo, Taddeo Marchese and Pietro Navarino. The Senate wanted Gianfrancesco to reconfirm Taliano Furlano in their service (fol.32t. 8 Dec.1433).
105. In December 1433 they sent Jeronimo di Nichuola to him at Ravenna (S.S. reg.13, fol.34t, 28 Dec.1433).
106. S.S. reg.13, fol.64t, 17 Apr.1433. See also Eroli, G., Erasimo Gattamelata de Narni, suoi monumenti e sua famiglia (Rome 1876), pp.50-62, for a detailed appraisal of the negotiations, which proved very difficult.
107. S.S. reg.13, fol.32t. 8 Dec.1433: "Volumus q. esse debeatis cum nostris conductoribus... qm. mittant eorum nuntios ubique locorum et in Romandiola et Marchia et alio, ubi sunt gentes duci Mli., et procurent habere de illis." The Senate promised to make sure that there were sufficient quantities of money in Ravenna for this purpose.
108. See N. Valois, Le Pape et le Concile (Paris 1909), vol.1. p.298 and Monumenta Concil. General. Saeculi, (Vienna 1857), XV, pt.2, p.659.
109. For a more detailed description of these events see Treccani (Mi), pp.299ff. and Jones, The Malatesta of Rimini op.cit., p.180: "The Duke of Milan, no friend of a Venetian Pope, and resolute ally of no power, chose to adopt the council and use it to justify a covert offensive on the dominions of the Pope."
110. A.S.M. Carteggio Visc. Extra Dominium, cart.13, fol.80, 25 September 1433. (Instructions to Jacobino de Iseo).
111. A.S.M. Carteggio Visc. Extra Dominium, cart.13, fols. 82, 82t. "Bisogna habiamo qualche honesta e iusta excusatione per la quale vegniamo a nuova guerra."
112. Ibid. ".... facesse opera cum effecto presso al Marchese di Mantova chel fosse cum nuy a tale impresa... e principale ancora luy a metterla a bono effecto..."
113. Ibid. "...advisandote Jacomino, che nuy speremo chel Marchese de Mantova consentirà voluntera a questa practica per duy rispetti. Lo primo e principale sie chel cognosse, che la debilitatione de li signori e lo aumento de li civitate vera anchora ad essere totale destruzione del stato suo, e di fioli. L'altro respecto si é che essendo luy Signore de auctoritade e cum molti fioli, veresimelmente deveria desiderare de accresscere el stato suo perché possa lassare di terre, e in più fermo et saldo stati che non hano, maxime perché el stato non e grande per uno, molto meno per molti..."
114. There is no room here to document these campaigns in detail; only their consequences will be examined. See Treccani (Mi), pp.300ff.

115. This was, as usual, fraught with difficulties because of Amedeo's opportunism. Filippo Maria had to promise to adopt a Savoyard prince as his son, promising substantial territorial concessions in the event of his dying without a legitimate heir (Genoa, Asti, Parma, Piacenza and Tortona). See F. Cognasso, Amedeo VIII (Turin 1913), vol.1, p.68, and vol.2, pp.158ff.. One of the first victims of this new alliance was Gian Giacomo Paleologo of Monferrat. See F. Cognasso, "L'Alleanza Sabauda-Milanese contro Venezia nel 1434", A.S.L. ser.5,ii, 1918.
116. Arch.Gon. B.2185, 14 March 1434, 22 and 23 May (Report of Simone da Crema to Gianfrancesco). Most of them deal with the disputes within the Council of Basle. There is one entry in the reports which would indicate that Venice and Milan were being discussed between Simone and Sigismund: ".... lo S. Imperatore si me ha domandato a grande secreto se la Signoria di Venesia poria far un ponte sopra Adda contra.. la voluntade del duca de Milano al quale non sepe dar ferma risposta, ma che io credevo di sì..."
117. S.S. reg.13, fol.2, 6 Sept.1433.
118. Gianfrancesco was receiving news about the progress of these negotiations from Zenebaldo de Brolio who at that time was Mantuan ambassador in Ferrara. e.g. See Arch. Gon. B. 1228, fol.30, 26 Feb.1434.
119. Smith, op.cit.,p.97: "Of the 22 years between his first employment and the end of the reign in 1447 Sforza was in direct Viscontean employment for only about 7 years (1425-30, 1431-3), in a state of friendly independence for about 6 years (1433-4,1438-9, 1441-2, 1443-5, 1447) and in hostile employment for 9 years (1430-1, 1434-8, 1439, 1441, 1442-3, 1445-7)."
120. S.S. reg.13, fol.67, 7 May 1434.
121. Ibid., fol.71t. 21 May 1434. On the same day the Senate sent a severe letter of complaint to Filippo Maria.
122. See Treccani (Mi). p.308, and ff. Also M. Longhi "Niccolò Piccinino in Bologna", Atti e memcrie della R Deput, di S.P. di Romagna, 3rd ser. XXIV. (1906).
123. S.S. reg.13, fol.70t. "cum propter suspitiones q. dietim resurgunt de factis Bononie et de hiis qui sentiuntur de motibus gentium ducis Mli.." Gianfrancesco was to examine and prepare all munitions "pro faciendo qualiter se in ordine reperiunt ut ea omnia possint optari et operari si opportuerit..."
124. e.g. See S.S. reg.13, fols. 82, 86, 88t., 100t., 106.114.
125. Ibid., fol. 105, 11 Sept.1434.
126. Ibid., fol. 108t. "instamus et attendimus ac faciendam redrigere gentes nostras, et facemus omnis possibilis provisiones ad fortificandum exercitum nostrum in illis partibus, et ab hoc conducere intendimus gentes novas, et in bono numero..." They were anxious that Florence should pull its weight.
127. The remainder of the war is described in Treccani (Mi.) p.310 and Erolì, pp.76ff.
128. S.S. reg.13, fol.135, 27 Jan.1435.

129. Ibid., fol. 150t. 20 Apr. 1435.
130. Ibid., fol. 161, 28 May 1435.
131. Ibid., fol. 154, 29 April 1435.
132. Ibid., fol. 163. 1 June 1435. Gianfrancesco was to discuss "qualiter providere possit in omni casu opportunitatis, considerantes condicionibus temporum et rerum presentialiter."
133. S.S. reg.13, fol.169t, 1 July 1435. The number of troops available, according to fol.164 was 7,000 cavalry and 4,000 infantry.
134. S.S. reg.13, fol. 171, 21 July 1435.
135. Ibid., fol.175, 11 Aug.1435. No subject of Milan was to enter the Bresciano or Bergamasco and no Venetian was to enter Milanese territory under pain of severe punishment.
136. S.S. reg. 13, fol.183, 1 Oct.1435. "... qm. societas I.d. Marchione reduceatur ad num. lancearum 500 et procuretur cum illis honestis modis qui videbuntur quamquam provisione sua ducat. 1,000 teneat equites 100 in dicto. numero lancearum 500.....'
137. S.S. reg. 13, fol.184t, 14 Oct.1435.
138. Ibid., fol. 187t. 3 Nov.1435.
139. Arch. Gon. B. 43, fol.191t.
140. For details of the Milanese in Genoa see A.Pesce, Sulle relazioni tra la Repubblica di Genova e Filippo Maria Visconti. (Torino 1921).
141. S.S. reg.13, fol.193t. 2 Jan.1436.
142. Ibid., fol.194, 4 Jan.1436. "Procurando qm. se reduceat in Brixiensi teneatque gentes nostras in ordine..." See also fol.195, 10 Jan.1436.
143. S.S. 13, reg. 196, 12 Jan.1436.
144. Ibid."... verum sentietis qm. I. ds. March. Mant. missiset per dicto Cavalcabove... his praticis et de causis vos bone materiam immiscere non debeatis."
145. S.S. reg.13, fols. 202t. & 209. (Instructions from the Senate to Gianfrancesco).
146. S.S. reg.13, fol.201t. 19 Feb.1436. (Instructions to Contarini): "et hortare debeas Ill.m.suam ut dignere velit conceptum et iudicium suum ad sinceram affectionem paternam quam caritatem et omnem quem ad Ill. m. suam gerimus... procurare debeas evellere de mente eius ranchorem et qm. remaneat bene contentus et reconciliatus."
147. S.S. reg.13, fols. 210t. and 211, 1 March 1436.

148. S.S. reg.13, fol. 20lt; "Et insuper, si est contentus servire sm. mutare vellet conditionem capitulorum, auditis omnibus cum modis quibus hactenus servivit, q. pur persisteret in ista opinione, dicere debeas qm. scribes nobis quaecumque tibi dixerit, et sic facies et expectabis mandatum."
149. S.S. reg.13, fol.215.
150. Arch. Gon. B. 43, fol.191.
151. S.S. reg.13, fol.215, 9 March 1436: "sed si pax esset, vellet ab ipso capitaneato absolvi..."
152. S.S. reg.13, fol.211, 1 March 1436. "Et ad factum non essendi sub comiti Francisci..."
153. In fact, on 3 April 1436 Giovanni de Imperiis, the man who had played a part in the downfall of Carmagnola in 1432, was sent to Francesco Sforza: "ut nobis libere dicere et aperire velit oppinionem et consilium suum de modis, viis et provisionibus observandis in casu quo veniamus ad hanc impresam seu guerram". (S.S. reg.13, fol.221t).
154. This view is proposed by Mahnke, op.cit., p.41. She says: "It is difficult to estimate how serious the antipathies dividing the Gonzaga family in the last decade of Gianfrancesco's life. Perhaps Ludovico went to Milan as a harbinger of his father, or to make sure that there would be a Gonzaga in the winning camp no matter which side triumphed. The stories of favouritism to Carlo may have been a smoke screen invented to reassure Venice of Gonzaga's continued good-faith. In Gonzaga history conflicts and in this case private animosities may have been resolved with the decision of alliance. But Carlo would continue to be a thorn in Ludovico's side."
155. The exact date is unknown. The earliest evidence is 15 April 1436. (S.S. reg. 13, fol. 225) and so it must have occurred shortly before.
156. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 20 April 1436. This letter is written in Ludovico's own hand.
157. Arch. Gon. B. 51 (Condotte), 21 April 1436.
158. S.S. reg. 13, fol.225.
159. Arch. Gon. B. 37, 16 April 1436. ".... illam q. vobis heredem insitutetis, habemus in filium et reccomendatum nostrum ipsum quem per vos institutem heredem eiusque statum sua reccomendatione et protectione nra., tueri, defendere et conservare promittimus sic hactenus fecimus et facimus Ill. Mag. vr. et statum vrm."
160. Arch. Gon. B. 85, fasc.14, fol.4, 3 Nov.1436: "Tibi etiam potestatem... valeas instituere unum alium de filiis tuis legitimis tibi placabilem ad successionem Marchionatum et dominorum tuorum." For the letter of 9 June from Sigismund to Paola see Arch. Gon. B. 428 (Imperial letters), fol. 126 "... applicata ergo, dilecta et devota nostra, hanc sacram parabolam ad predictum Ludovicum qui, iuvenili furore conductus, et sine forte Mediolani serpentus suasu, et.... in eam miserium lapsus est..."

161. See Pesce, op.cit., p.52. Arch. Gon. B. 1419, fol.56: "ad salutem et conservationem statum et libertas omnium partium et ad universale bonam totius Italie."
162. See T. Toderini, "La prima condotta di Francesco Sforza per Venezia", Archivio Veneto, vol IX (1875) for a fuller study of this.
163. S.S. reg. 13, fol. 231t, 13 May 1436.
164. Ibid., 242, 9 June 1435. "nam reddimur certi qm. parsimonizare curabit pecunias nostras, plus quam si sue proprie essent." The Venetians were quite confident in Gianfrancesco as far as these financial matters were concerned.
165. See S.S. reg.13, fols. 232 & 240t. This required a special dispensation because of consanguinity of the third grade. This was granted on 3 Dec. 1436. (Arch. Gon. B.179, fols. 222 and 223-5).
166. For details, of which this is a summary, see Treccani (Mi).p.319.
167. Florence was to pay six tenths and Venice the remaining four tenths while he was south of the Po and vice versa when he was north of it. For the negotiations see S.S. reg.13, fol.269t, Oct.1436. Venice had originally suggested 800 lances and 800 infantry.
168. Ibid.
169. See Smith, op.cit., p.89: "Though the pay was less than he would have had in Milanese service, Sforza was at least Captain General, although Gonzaga had the same status. Despite the condotta, it is not certain that Sforza had not yet decided to break irrevocably with Filippo Maria... a secret stipulation that Sforza himself could decide whether or not he should cross the Po; the secrecy was insisted on by the League so that the Duke should not realise that its control of Sforza was conditional."
170. Osio, vol. III, pt. 1 no. CXLIII, p.137.
171. L.S.C. opening no. 104, 4 Jan.1437. This had really been started in the preceeding month in earnest.
172. L.S.C. 106, 9 Jan.1437: "ut differe velit quam minus ei possibili est in Mantua..."
173. LS.C. 107, 9 Jan.1437.
174. L.S.C. 108, 18 Jan.1437.
175. L.S.C. 110, 22 Jan.1437.
176. L.S.C.112, 31 Jan.1437.
177. L.S.C.115, 6 Feb.1437.
178. L.S.C. 119, 9 Feb. 1437. They sent Gianfrancesco 28,000 ducats to try to sort this one out.

179. L.S.C.139, 6 March 1437. The Senate instructed Gianfrancesco to "providere qm. gentes nras. ab his violentes et predis prorsus abstineant..."
180. L.S.C. 123, 14 Feb.1437.
181. L.S.C. 124, 15 Feb.1437.
182. L.S.C. 128, 18 Feb.1437.
183. See Eroli, op.cit., pp.91-2. Treccani (Mi.) p.320.
184. The first information of this is in L.S.C.129, 19 Feb.1437. See also C.Simonetta, "De impeto facto, hostes turbantur fusique in fugam circumquaque vertuntur suo cum maximo non dedecore solum, sed etiam detrimenti, amissis tum equis quamplurimis, tum etiam machinis et impedimentis fere omnibus; in ea pugna captus est inter steros fortissime dimicans juvenis, tum genere, tum virtute insignis, Ludovicus Gonzaga, Johannis Francisci mantuani principis filius..."
185. L.S.C.129, 20 Feb.1437: "precatur ut eis libeat providere q. prefatus Ludovicus detineatur et nobis assignetur."
186. An example of the many assurances throughout this year L.S.C.143, 11 March. They wrote to Gianfrancesco that they understood fully his feelings and anxieties regarding Ludovico and reassured him that Vitturi was busily involved on their behalf. "etiam suasit ipsi comiti (Sforza) ut idem Ludovicus retineatur et bene salvetur ac taliter custodiatur q. non. possit evadere...."
187. L.S.C.130, 23 Feb.1437. (The Senate to Stefano Contarini): "se levabit de horam in hora et de momento in momentum..."
188. L.S.C.134, 1 March 1437. (Report to Vitturi in Florence). They go on to say that even though the major onus of the war is to rest upon Lombardy, the Florentines are to be urged to arm as well because the threats to them by the Milanese are still great.
189. See Eroli, op.cit., pp.92-3.
190. L.S.C.135, 2 March 1437. (Letter to Ermolao Donato, the Venetian ambassador to Eugenius IV). The letters to Donato frequently give up to date summaries of military operations while their major intention is to get the Pope to allow Sforza to cross the Po to help them. This appears with greater insistence than ever.
191. L.S.C. 136, 3 March 1437. (Venetian instructions to Contarini). The Senate wanted a punishing campaign.
192. Eroli, op.cit., pp.93-4. See also Treccani, p.40.
193. L.S.C.138, 4 March 1437. (Letter to Genoa): "per crescentiam aque illius fluminis Abdue... qd. factum illud valde difficultavit...."

194. L.S.C. 148, 18 March 1437. (Letter to Vitturi). The 500 infantry had been attacked by the Milanese. "super noctis multis gentibus armigeribus et aliud gentibus partis adverse illi pedites nri. non volentes sustinere impetum, nec habentes aliquam fortitudinem, coacti fuerunt dare terga et deserere locum." Four constables and about 100 infantry were captured "unde omnia illa negotia impedita fuerunt (et gentes nre. retractis navibus et ponte retrocesserunt)."
195. L.S.C. 137, 4 March 1437 (Senate to Gianfrancesco): "... nam si gentes inimici hoc perterrita hyeme cum tanta frigoris crudelitate, continue equitarunt, certum est q. nre. hoc tempore poterunt honorem nrm. et. vrm. viriliter et potenter facere...."
196. Re. Savoy/Milan alliance see Treccani (Mi.) pp.322-3.
197. There are many references in L.S.C. to Piccinino's movements. e.g. 141, 8 March in a letter to Sforza's chancellor Angelo Simonetta. The Venetians were also trying to get Este to impede Piccinino's progress to Lombardy (L.S.C. 142, 11 March; letter to Gianfrancesco).
198. L.S.C. 141, 6 March (Senate to Gianfrancesco): "vos paterne rogamus ut non teneatis in animo aliquam passionem, sed leto animo..."
199. L.S.C. 142, 10 March 1437 to Brescia.
200. L.S.C. 142, 11 March 1437 Piccinino "dismissis fere omnibus suis peditibus in partibus Luce", was marching towards Pontremoli from Sarzana on his way to Lombardy. Letters were also sent to the Podestà of Bergamo, Paolo Pasqualigo, regarding the security of the rocche of Romano, Colloni and Vigani (L.S.C.143, 11 March ).
201. L.S.C. 151, 23 March , the Senate wanted Gianfrancesco "ut provideatis tenere, seu alloggiare illas gentes nras. quanto magis unitas et strictas sit possibile" along the frontier so that he could take the offensive when a suitable opportunity should present itself.
202. L.S.C. 151, 23 March (Senate to the Captain of Casalmaggiore).
203. L.S.C. 154 30 March (Senate to Gianfrancesco). They promised to send it within three days but as late as 6 April the Mantuan ambassador to Venice, Matteo Corrado, was still discussing arrangements (L.S.C. 160). Filippo Maria also knew of this. See Manaresi, op.cit., vol.2, pt.1, no.1675.
204. S.S. reg.14, fol.28t. The Senate's commission to Paolo Tron to persuade Gianfrancesco "exire poterat in castris, et viriliter attendere omnibus modis possibilibus ad dampnam inimici et subditorum suorum." cf. L.S.C. 13 April (Senate to Tron): "non veniente Nicolao Picenino, habet gentes ad sufficienium q. sunt potentes ad tenendum campum, et propter multas alias considerationes, nobis prorsus videatur, et volumus, q. quanto celerius sit possibile, exeat in campum, contra terras et loca hostilia, nec debeat habere consideratio ad Nicolaum Piceninum, qui in partibus illis Tuscie et Ianuensis est talitus involutus..."



205. S.S. reg.14, fol.28t. 4 April 1437.
206. Erolì (p.96), suggests that Gattamelata suspected Gianfrancesco's fidelity; but he does not cite any documentary evidence to support this: "I Gattamelata erasi accanto a molt'indizi, che il Generale stava a bada per favorire il Piccinino, e che mulinava con esso lui tradire la Repubblica."
207. L.S.C.171, 21 Apr.1437. Corrado was consulted over this in Venice and Tron was required to relay his fears about idle and vulgar gossip. On the 26 April they tried to reassure him that they were making every attempt to get Sforza to alleviate some of the pressure on him. (173).
208. L.S.C.170, 21 April (Senate to Tron): "Audivimus ordinem datam in facto Brignani, quod sicut speramus, optatam sortietur effectum...."
209. Arch. Gon. B. 2094, e.g. Fols. 158, 159, 197-200.
210. Arch. Gon. B. 2185 for 1436-7 and B.1081 (Pesaro affairs).
211. See Jones, The Malatesta of Rimini, cit., p.187 (note 2). This work clarifies the complex background to the affairs of the Malatesta of Pesaro and their relationship with Rimini, Jones mentions the 'rocche' of Pesaro, Fossombrone and Montevercchio, but Arch.Gon. B.2185 for March and April mentions Gradara and Montemarciano.
212. e.g. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 20 April 1437 (Gianfrancesco to Pesaro): "...A noi non e possibile per le insupportabel spese...."
213. e.g. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 22 March 1437 (Gianfrancesco to Paola): "...perche fazemo mazore stima del Conte Francesco del quale ne havemo mazore bisogno cha de li diti S.vri. fradelli...."
214. Arch. Vz. L.S.C.176, 30 April. Tron was also to persuade Gianfrancesco "q. per consequenda et amplidana hac victoria bonum et valde utile foret." Tron was to stay with Gianfrancesco until Pietro Loredan arrived in a matter of a few days.
215. L.S.C. 180, 5 May (Senate to Gianfrancesco).
216. L.S.C. 181, 7 May (Senate to Loredan).
217. L.S.C. 182, 8 May (Senate to Gianfrancesco): "Nam veniente Nicholao videmus q. dux. Mli. non habebit ultra equos 5,000 in Lombardia. Et nos cum Dei presidio habere credimus equos 9,000 computatio Mag.o. Dno. Arimini...."
218. L.S.C. 197, 23 May (Senate to Loredan). See also 192, 19 May (to Loredan).
219. L.S.C. 206, 10 June; Senate to Loredan mentions 6 June. Treccani (Br.) p.40 says the tenth.
220. L.S.C. 208, 12 June (Senate to Loredan): "Magno desiderio expectabamus singulis diebus et horis audire successe exercitus nostri...."

221. L.S.C. 211, 22 June.
222. L.S.C. 212, 25 June (Senate to Gianfrancesco).
223. Simonetta, op.cit., p.70 re. success of Piccinino: "At ubi Piccinini huic factus est obviam cum philippinis viribus, non difficulter omnem ejus impetum repressit et ita repressit, ut, amissa majore impedimentorum parte, in Brixianos redite coactus fuerit." See Osio, vol.iii, pt.1, no. CLI. 14 June 1437 on the quickening up of Milanese movements in the Cremonese.
224. See Smith, op.cit., pp.89-90.
225. Gianfrancesco regarded Piccinino as a formidable adversary. According to Manaresi, vol.2, pt.1, no.1684 (letter to Piacenza): "... avendo di lui molta paura il Signore di Mantova".
226. L.S.C. 216, 2 July; Loredan reports "molestias et incessantia tedia ab ill. gentibus nris, pro facto pecuniarum". There was further trouble at the end of August (L.S.C.245).
227. L.S.C. 219, 6 July for differences of opinion between Brandolini and Traddeo Marchese. There were still reports of disaffection later in the month (227, 15 July).
228. L.S.C. 221, 7 July (Senate to Gianfrancesco).
229. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 7 July 1437: "Ipi. consortii mee dixit q. dux Mli. eidem comiti comisserat q. cum senserit secutam esse mortem coniungis Caroli nati mei, michi deberet notificare se esse contentem ac libenter velle eius filiam in uxorem ipi. Carolo tradere dum hoc michi placeret...." At the end of August (24th) the Venetians supported Carlo's marriage to a daughter of the Marquis of Monferrat (L.S.C.241).
230. L.S.C. 225, 11 July (Senate to Gianfrancesco).
231. L.S.C. 242, 12 August (Instructions from the Senate to Marco Dandolo).
232. L.S.C. 242, 13 Aug. (Senate to Loredan). Preparation of the river fleet had been going on at least since the beginning of July (Arch.Gon. B.43, fol.192, 3 July; Foscari to Gianfrancesco). See also S.S. reg.14, fol.53t, 17 Aug.: "super facto armato Padi qua. facere omnio deliberamus et potentes, et iam incepimus providere ad necessaria." Gianfrancesco had himself arranged the by now customary truces with Guastalla, Mirandula and Coreggio earlier in the year (Arch.Gon.B.43, fols. 248, 246, 238, 234, 224, 227).
233. e.g. L.S.C. 248, 28 Aug. (Senate to Gianfrancesco): "... q. omnes gentes nras. undique... et unitas teneant ut semper cum maiori securitate et potente valeant honorem suum et nostrum facere..."
234. L.S.C. fol.156t. 10 Sept. (From now on the numbering of the L.S.C. changes. The previous numberings refer to openings whereas the latter part has its pages individually numbered.)
235. L.S.C. fol.156t. 10 Sept. (Senate to Gianfrancesco): "ut gentes nre. quanto magis possibile sit teneatur uniti quamquam provideatur ad custodiam et conservationem illarum locorum nrorum. tam ultra quam citra Oleii que magis importantie videntur..." See L.S.C. fol.160, 15 Sept. in which the Senate expresses its fears to Sforza lest Piccinino should cross the Oglio. It was clear that the Venetians had underestimated the strength of Milanese resistance.

236. See Treccani (Br.) p.42.
237. Cristoforo da Soldo, "La Cronaca" (1437-1468), ed. Giuseppe Brizzolara, R.I.S. vol. XXI, pt.iii, p.3: "et era stati zugno, luio, augusto e per fina alli 9 de settembre e niente haveva fatto ne olsado cazarse inanci per pagura delle gente del Duca de Milano...."
238. Ibid., pp.2-3: ".... E fu preso quasi tutto lo cariazo; fu preso da circa cinque cento carri; senza altre persone e altre cose. Apreso a questo Nicolò Picenino campeza quallo Bergamascho per modo che in 4 zorni have plusor terrezoie; et stete dal soprascritto di 10 fina a 25 de settembrio a campo a Calepio."
239. L.S.C. fol.168t. 25 Sept. The Senate replied to Tron that it sympathised with him and urged him to use all his powers of persuasion to induce Gianfrancesco to do their bidding.
240. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 15 Sept.: ".... senties personam suum hic semper adesse ad bonam gubernationem et gentium istarum siquid accadet...."
241. L.S.C. fol.176t. 29 Sept. (Senate to Tron).
242. L.S.C. fol.182t, 3 Oct. (Senate to Gianfrancesco). See also Arch.Gon. B.1419, fol.63.
243. Da Soldo, op.cit., p.3. In P. Spino, Istoria della vita e fatti dell' eccellente Capitano di guerra Bartolomeo Colleoni (Bergamo 1569), Bk. II, p.39, it states that Piccinino also had 500 men sent to him by Ludovico, but this is hardly likely.
244. e.g. Platina writes about the crossing of the Adda; "Transierant jam cohortes aliquot atque equitum turmae cum tantus concursus factus est, ut vertere terga vix potuerint pars interficitur, pars nando gurgitibus absumitur, Principe Mantuano temeritatem Praefectorum accusante, quod ignari rei militarie totiusque militiae expertes, tantum exercitus periculo abiecerent..." (p.332). See also Tarducci, L'alleanza... cit., p.268, note 1.
245. R.I.S. vol. XXI, col.976-8. See also Platina, p.334: "Praeterea deprehendit, Praefectos Venetos plus Gatta quam sibi detulisse qua quidem in re, et detrahare auctoritati suae, quae in bello plurimum valet, et parum ei fidere sunt visi." See also Eroli, pp.94-5. For the Gubbio Chron. see R.I.S. vol. XXI, col.976: "Il Marchese di Mantova aveva sdegno coi Provveditori della Signoria...."
246. Bracciolini in R.I.S. vol. XX col.39.
247. L.S.C. fol.184t. 5 Oct. (Instructions from the Senate to the Provveditori): "... quod valde molestia habuimus inconvalescentem illustri persone sue et rogitis eum parte nostra ut velit aliquialiter moderare labores suos et curare ad tenendum personum suam incolume...."
248. L.S.C. ibid,; fol.200, 21 April, fol.197, 16 Oct.
249. L.S.C. fol. 191t, 12 Oct.

250. The first reference to this in the Venetian Archive is in S.S. reg.14, fol.67 in a letter dated 27 Oct. in reply to Gianfrancesco's letter of the 20th. This is confirmed by L.S.C. fol.209.(27 Oct.) in instructions to Contarini.
251. Ibid.
252. Ibid. : ".... et intelligetis et cognoscentes quid importat ad pns. statui nro., ut gentes nre. sine gubernatione remaneatur..."
253. L.S.C. fol.209; Contarini was instructed to report back immediately to the Senate.
254. S.S. reg.14, fol.69t, 4 Nov. (Senate to Morosini): ".... et inter cetera Ill. Ds. March. Mant. Capitan. nr. generalis asserit deliberasse amplius non exercere artem militarem."
255. S.S. reg.14, fol.70t, 6 Nov. (Instructions to Contarini): "...Et propterea iam missimus ad illustre Comitem Franciscum ad instandum et procurandum qd. Padum transeat et gubernationem nostrarum gentium ipse solus habeat... qua facta, prefatus dns. Marchio liber sit, et absolutus remaneat a capitaneatu predicto, et gubernatio nostrorum gentium remaneat illi cui eam dederimus... Volumus ut eius Ill. m. dicatis qd., eo recedente, contente erimus ut ipse gentes sue ad nra. servicia remaneant..." These instructions were repeated on 11 November (L.S.C. fol.215t.)
256. L.S.C. fol. 215t. 11 Nov. On the 17 November (fol.218) discussions with Sanseverino were going quite well. Venice offered him a condotta of 500 cavalry and 300 infantry plus Fontanelle, together with "unam aliam bonam possessionem."
257. S.S. reg.14, fol.70t, 6 Nov. (Instructions to Contarini).
258. Ibid., fol.72, 16 Nov. Also L.S.C. fol 223t, 23 Nov. One of the other reasons for asking Gianfrancesco to stay on until the end of December was that there had been disagreements between Guidantonio Manfredi and Sigismondo Malatesta over winter lodgings for their respective troops. The Senate did assure Gianfrancesco that they would make every effort to reappoint before the end of December and to liberate him at the earliest opportunity.
259. S.S. reg.14, fol.72, 16 Nov. ".... ceterum quiq.pridie nobis scripsistis ex gentibus aliquos esse non plene fideles..."
260. L.S.C. fol.223, 22 Nov. (Senate to Gianfrancesco): ".... Ill. N. plurimum gravari atque dolere, de aliquibus verbis que dicitis sensisse in diminutionem honorem vestrum hic diversimodi divulgari..." They go on to assure him that it is very difficult to control what people say in such a big city as Venice and that the Senate still regarded him as a most loyal and devoted son.
261. L.S.C. fol. 226t, 26 Nov. (to Contarini) and S.S. reg.14, fol.14t. to Gianfrancesco (same date): "quarum percepto tenore (of Gianfrancesco's persistence), displicentiam habuimus non exiguam, et maxime ob ea que videmus prefate Ill. m. reportata fuisse..."

262. See Erolì, pp.96-97. Also S.S. reg.14 fols. 75 and 75t, 29 Nov.; L.S.C. fol.227t, 1 Dec. Contarini had to pour oil on troubled waters because it was more essential than ever to continue to have Gattamelata's services.
263. Da Soldo, pp.5-6.
264. Erolì, p.97 and S.S. reg.14, fol.78 (Instructions to Contarini): "... nobis non videbitur dandum esse hoc onus Magnifico Gattamelate." The Senate emphasised that Sforza was still their first choice. According to their envoys to Sforza, he "nunquam se movere voluit, nec ire in aliquam partem ad requisitionem nram. absque licentia et consensu Florentinorum" (S.S. fols. 80t and 81, 12 and 14 Dec.), and Venetian relations with Florence were none too harmonious at this point.
265. See Erolì, p.98-9 and S.S. reg.14, fol.83, 17 Dec. There was to be a solemn investiture in Brescia: "Verum vobis declaramus qd. esset nre. intentionis et ita providere debeatis, qd. pro supplemento conducto suo 1.400 se fulceat de lanceis que fuerunt Ill. d.m.Mant.ac.de lanceis nris. spezzatis..." On 11 January 1438 he was to occupy the house formerly belonging to Gianfrancesco in Brescia (L.S.C.fol.243).
266. S.S. reg.14, fol.85, 28 Dec. (to Contarini): ".... est nra. intentio dividere gentes ipsas... in lanceis spezzatis cum illo habiliori modo vobis sut possibile..." See also L.S.C. fol.233t. 12 Dec.
267. On 10 December the Senate sent Andrea Bernardo to consult with Gianfrancesco over this (L.S.C. fol.232t.)
268. L.S.C. fol. 252. 10 Feb. Carilia = 40 lances; Pietro de Lucca = 60 lances; Donino de Parma = 40-60 lances, Scaramutio de Lucera = 40 lances. See also S.S. reg.14, fols. 89t and 91.
269. S.S. reg.14, fol.94, 10 Feb; fol.95, 17 Feb. fol. 98t, 1 March.
270. A.S.M. Carteggio Visconteo Extra Dominium, cart.14, fol.16.
271. Ibid., "El popolo de Mantova è alegrissimo sia levato como è. Cussí sta como sentimo, e palam e secrete."
272. Ibid., "Vene a Mantova el genero del Duxe per ambassatore. Quello di non have audientia. Comenciano esser mal veduti."
273. S.S. reg.14, fol.94, 10 Feb.1438. Similarly in March he was worried about reinforcements around Brignano and Venice replied that there were no sinister intentions (S.S. reg.14, fol.99).
274. E.g. S.S. reg. 14, fol.98t. 1 March. "... difficile sit nobis credere qd. Comes Fco. Sf. in concordio sit cum duce..."
275. Treccani (Mi.) p.325.
276. Smith, op.cit., p.92.
277. Osio, vol. iii, pt.1, no. CLXIX, 18 Jan.1438.

278. Ibid. No. CLXX 25 Feb.1438.".... a ciò che tra luy e nuy fosse una bona amicizia et intelligencia per modo che nuy facessemo per luy e lo stato quello tutto che faressemo per lo nostro proprio, e cossí luy versa vice fesse per nuy et per lo nostro stato faria per lo suo proprio, quello ch'el voria che nuy gli facessemo, non avendo effecto el parentado. Advisandoti che in ogni evento, noy lo volemo havere in carissimo et honorevole fratello...."
279. A.S.M. Archivio Ducale, Reg. no.41, Rr als O (1434-41); Register of Giov. Francesco Gallina, fols. 363t-364t, 8 March 1438.
280. See Treccani (Mi.) pp.328-9 and da Soldo, op.cit.,p.6: "Del mese di marzo si levò et andò per lo Bolognese per andar a Ravenna: e subito have Ravenna... e li stete per fina alla fine de mazo. Com questi inzegni se diceva ch'el monstrava di esser disdegnato com il Duca e volerse conzare com lo Papa Eugenio chi era in liga com la nostra signoria de Venesia; et si diceva ch'el Papa ge donava Perosa, Siso e Citade di Castello; e'l faceva Confalonier di la Giesia, e'l faseva so Capitano General. Ma infra questo, el ditto Nicolao Picenino menava trattado com li Bolognesi e con alcuni altri, e specialmente com lo Marchese di Mantova si come apparse di puci..." See also C. Albicini, "Il governo visconteo di Bologna", Atti e Memorie della R. Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Provincie di Romagna, 3rd ser., vols. 24-5, 1906-7. Also Sanuto, col.1057.
281. S.S. reg.14, fol.104, 17 April 1438. (Senate to Badoer). "... ac de alii de novo conducimus solum ad finem conservandi non minus statum suum qm. nrum..."
282. S.S. reg.14, fol.107, 24 April. (Instructions to Paolo Trevisan, Commander of the Po fleet).
283. S.S. reg.14, fol.109, 3 May; 150 lances and 100 'lancie spezzati' formerly belonging to Gianfrancesco. Not long before the Venetian were none too keen on Carlo joining their service and this sudden change of heart may have been a matter of concern for Gianfrancesco.
284. Arch. Gon. B. 2038-9, fasc. 4 (Gridario), 6-7 May in which it is stated that any Venetian soldiers still in Mantuan territory were to be sent away: "Ma se fusseno arrivati e allozati vogliamo che debi destenerli e sequestrarli perché gie ne possa esser facto rasone secondo el tenor de la dicta crida."
285. S.S. reg. 14, fol.113, 20 May. Also Sanuto, col.1060. "Fu eletto Andrea Morosini savio del Consiglio oratore a Mantova per farci certo del volere di quel marchese, se vuol essere nostro capitano, overo quello che vuol fare.
286. S.S. reg.14, fol.113t.24 May, 1438.
287. S.S. reg.14, fol.114t, 26 May 1438.
288. Ibid., fol.115t, 29 May: "... periculosissimi nobis esse videatur statui suo..."

289. A.S.M. Archivio Ducale, Reg. Ducale no.41, Rr als O, fols.376t.-378, 8 June: "Item, et ad concedendum et tradendum dicto D. Marchioni illam civitatem seu illas civitates, terras seu castra de civitatibus terris et castris dicti dni. dne. ducis pro fermamento predictorum de qua seu quibus ipsi procura melius videbitur."
290. Ibid. fols.382-384, 26 June. Muzano was to "promettendum et ipm.dnm. ducam spetialiter et solemniter obbligandum q. idem dnus. dux deffendet et manutenebit prefatum Illustrem dnm. Marchionem Mantue et cum filiis et heredibus in statu proprio in quo ad presens se reperit... et cum omnibus suis bonis vassallis et subditis, iuribus, iurisdictionibus, torris et fortificiis quas et quatenet et possidet vel quasi et tam de Marchionatu Mantue quam et de Veronens., Brixiens, ac Cremonens.." There was also protection for Giacomo and Feltrino and Guido Gonzaga. For full text see Arch. Gon. B. 43, fol.258.
291. Arch. Gon. B. 43, fol.258: "Item, et spetialiter ad promittendum pro dicto dno. duce et ad. obligandum spetialiter et solemniter et concedet dicto dno. Marchioni in feudum honorabile illam seu illas ex civitatibus ul. terris dicti dni. ducis que per ipm. dni. duce tenetur aut per eum aquirentur seu tenebuntur, de qua vel quibus ipsi procurator cum dicto domino Marchioni fuerint in concordia. Et spetialiter civitates Verone et Vicentie aut alteram ipsarum prout ipsi procuri melius videbitur et placuerit..."
292. The complete text of this is in Lünig, op.cit., vol.3, p.506. See also Tarducci 'L'alleanza...' cit, p.275.
293. S.S. reg. 14, fol.117t, 13 June.
294. Ibid., 120, 22 June: "... iste dilaciones sunt maximi detrimenti et periculi ad statum suum et nostrum..."
295. Da Soldo, op.cit., p.7: "... e sapiati che i nostri erano da circa 9 millia cavalli e ben 6 millia fanti da pé, senza le partigiane; pur quelli del Duca erano più."
296. Sanuto, col.1059-60: "Dipoi di Gugno Niccolò Piccinino con tutto il campo andò ad accamparsi a Casal Maggiore, e subito gli tolse l'acqua delle fosse..... a dì primo di Luglio s'ebbe nuova, avere Niccolò Piccinino avuto Casal Maggiore in questo modo. Gli tolse prima l'acqua, e dubitando, che non fosse tolto loro il resto, i cittadini vennero a patti di dargli la terra, salvo l'avere e le persone; e dargli ducati 10,000...."
297. S.S. reg.14, fol.122, 30 June: "... et considerantibus commoditatem qua ipse gentes recipere possent, si forte qd. absit et transierent per illa loca a Marcharia infra versus Padum, qui cum naviglis per viam padi, et oleii, faciendo se fortes cum aliquibus galeones, facere possent pontem super olum ad beneplacitum suum et habere subsidium victualium et aliarum rerum de locis ducis Mediolani."

298. S.S. reg.14, fol.124, 2 July: "Clarissime.. vidimus quam de malo in peius res iste procedent, nisi cito et bene provideatur, ita ut fortasse differendo, difficile erit rimedium adhibere."
  299. Da Soldo, pp.8+9.
  300. Ibid., p.9: "ogni homo fuziva per modo che in trei zorni da circo a circo a Bressa a otto millia non romagni pur uno solo cane in le terre che ogni cosa non fuzisse a Bressa." See also Treccani (Mi.) p.330 and Treccani (Br.) pp.46-7.
  301. S.S. reg.14, fol.127 t. 7 July (Senate to Badoer): "... dicatis et offeritis sibi nomine nostro Cremonam et Cremam si que tempore aquiretur, dummodo publice velit esse nobiscum."
  302. S.S. reg.14, fol.128t. 9 July: "... nos non posse quiq. mali de eo credere, nec etiam suspicari..." They were not even deterred by Morosini's warnings on 6 July. See Sanuto, col.1060: "In questo giorno a di 7 giunse Andrea Mauroceno stato a mantova, e riferì al Consiglio il tradimento del Marchese de Mantova." But in S.S. reg.14, fol.127t. 9 July, the words "Rebellio dicto die" were later added in the margin. On 8 July it was declared that Venetian money was no longer legal tender in Mantua.
  303. A.S.M. Archivio Ducale. Reg. Ducale no.44, Rr. als O., fols. 385t-387t. At the same time negotiations were in progress with Este, Florence and Francesco Sforza (fols.387t-397t). It was Filippo Maria's intention to isolate Venice diplomatically.
  304. S.S. reg.14, fol.130t. 14 July (Senate to Estè). Speaking of Gianfrancesco's defection they use such emotive phrases as "per maximam sumpsimus displacentiam". His action is "insperata"; "Vehementissimemque dolemus."
  305. S.S. reg.14, fol.131t. 14 July (Senate to Ermolao Donato): "....galleonorum sexaginta et qm. plurimum galearum.." Sanuto, col.1061: "Fu preso di fare una notabile armata nel Po per ammorzare la superbia del Duca di Milano e del Marchese di Mantova."
  306. S.S. reg. 14, fol.131: "Et si idem dns. Marchio Mantue vellet mutare propositum, certificamus ipm. dnm. Leonellum, qd. cicius et facilius reconciliabimur per manus ill. dni. genitoris sui et suas qm. alicuius dni. ul. persone viventis."
  307. Sanuto, col. 1061.
-



CHAPTER 5

THE SERVANT OF THE VISCONTI

(1438-1442)

CHAPTER 5THE SERVANT OF THE VISCONTI  
(1438-1442)IGianfrancesco and Filippo Maria Visconti

"Adì 13 de luio, la domenica de notte venendo el lunedì, arivò nel campo de Nicolò Piccinin lo Marchese de Mantova com ben quatro millia persone da pè e da cavallo. E in quella volta el ditto Marchese si discoprete contra la nostra Signoria de Venetia la qual l'haveva sempre mai tenuto per suo grande amico". 1/

Although it had been shown that the real situation was not as clear cut as Da Soldo's observation would have us believe, that moment when Gianfrancesco rode out to join Piccinino was a very brave one. It was also an action which involved immense risks. This was his first overt act of hostility towards Venice, but it was not a move which he made with unqualified confidence. We have seen from the previous chapter that Gianfrancesco was virtually forced into this compromising position; Milan was the only viable alternative to an alliance which he believed to be fraught with increasing suspicion. In that sense there were no alternatives open to him; but the new alliance was very problematical indeed. In the first place he was dealing with people he did not know. Trying to deal with the enigmatic and tortuous personality of Filippo Maria Visconti alone would have been difficult enough, quite apart from the fact that the Visconti as a family had represented the most serious threat to the Gonzaga family in the past. In this respect it is perhaps significant that no modern scholar has yet attempted a full scale study of this man. Contemporaries frequently found his actions unintelligible and Gianfrancesco must indeed have been very worried about how his relationship with him might work out. After all Gianfrancesco's

need was much greater than Filippo Maria's - the very existence of Mantua was at risk while he was obliged to put his faith in his former enemy. There is no doubt, however, that Filippo Maria regarded the alliance with Mantua as a desirable bonus in so far as Gianfrancesco, the former Captain General of Venice, could furnish him with valuable information about the enemy and could also put his not inconsiderable military experience at the disposal of Milan. The territorial position of Mantua, especially the area on the southern shores of Lake Garda, was very important because it controlled all easy communications between Brescia and the Venetian territories to the east. Indeed, the most important campaigns in this, the last stage of the war in this study, centre around this area. Furthermore, from the point of view of sheer morale, Gianfrancesco's defection must have been as damaging to Venice as it was a boost to Milan; the exact counterpart to Carmagnola's defection to Venice in the 1420's.

While these were good reasons why Filippo Maria should be friendly towards Gianfrancesco it did not necessarily follow that the Duke would effectively protect Mantua. Indeed Visconti policy had always tended towards absorption rather than protection and there was no telling what darker designs lurked behind the sunny words and extravagant promises in the correspondence prior to the agreement. Furthermore, whether he liked it or not, and however high his motives might have been, the stigma of deserter had attached itself to Gianfrancesco. Changing sides, of course, was very common among the condottieri of the period, but the high position which Gianfrancesco had occupied in Venetian service made this rather a different matter. How might this have affected his credibility with Filippo Maria; how open would the Duke be with Gianfrancesco regarding strategy and war aims? These were tantalising, but unanswerable questions at that moment.

Furthermore, Gianfrancesco's doubts about how effectively he might be able to influence events to the advantage of Mantua were further increased by the other men he had to deal with; particularly Piccinino himself and Alvise dal Verme. Both were ambitious men, suspicious of possible rivals and, moreover, they were as well established in Filippo Maria's favour as anyone could hope to be. Gianfrancesco was rather in the position of a new pupil joining a class in the middle of a term and, as it turned out, Gianfrancesco's fears that Filippo Maria might have to modify his promises to accommodate the ambitions of Dal Verme were indeed justified. Alvise, a Veronese, had seen service with Venice from 1425-1435, but, like Gianfrancesco he had turned to Milan because he had become increasingly frustrated at the restrictions imposed upon him by the Senate. All this tended to make Dal Verme very tenacious in his territorial ambitions. Furthermore, Gianfrancesco's decision to have to accept an inferior position in Milanese service must have been rather a severe jolt to his pride.

The question uppermost in Gianfrancesco's mind was whether or not he had done the right thing in becoming the servant of the Visconti, and it is the purpose of this chapter to answer this question by concentrating on the relationship with Filippo Maria and what diplomatic and military repercussions this had on Mantua's position with Venice; how really interested Filippo Maria was in Gianfrancesco's affairs; how effectively he fulfilled his promises to him and how all this manifested itself in the events of the war up to the Peace of Cavriana.

In fact it will be seen that the course of the war did nothing to ease the misgivings which Gianfrancesco initially felt. Filippo Maria's ambiguous behaviour and the decline of Milanese fortunes after Francesco Sforza's arrival on the scene in 1439 tended to make matters worse. It was only after a great deal of insistence and good luck that Gianfrancesco

managed at Cavriana to salvage what could easily have been a disastrous situation.

The pressures on Gianfrancesco and Mantua were immense throughout this last period of the war but the crisis of 1438 was the supreme one in Gianfrancesco's career, and it is to these dramatic events that we must first of all turn in evaluating Gianfrancesco's decision.

## II

### The Crisis of 1438

The documentation for 1438 is extremely good and it is possible to reconstruct in considerable detail the frenetic diplomatic activity of this period when Mantuan ambassadors were extremely busy in Milan and Ferrara. There has already been an examination of this material in 1899 by Tarducci, <sup>2/</sup> but although this represents quite a detailed narrative of events for the year, there was no real attempt to fit them into the general framework of Gianfrancesco's career. Once again the true significance of the crisis is essentially lost when it is removed from the context of the preceeding years. Nevertheless, it forms a useful basis for a re-examination of the extant material and will be frequently referred to in the following pages.

In July 1438 the most important consideration in Gianfrancesco's mind was what Venice would do in retaliation for his act. We have already referred to Sanuto's violent denunciation of Gianfrancesco and these sentiments were reflected elsewhere. A man with such a close knowledge of Venetian methods as Gianfrancesco cannot have imagined that some terrible retribution would not follow fairly swiftly. It was Gianfrancesco's

attempts to avert this possibility that provides the key to understanding the sometimes complex diplomatic exchanges of this initial period. There were essentially three distinct strands in the diplomacy of the time, all of which were closely interrelated and mutually dependent, so much so that it is very difficult to separate them. First and foremost Gianfrancesco felt that it was absolutely essential for a very rapid Milanese thrust against Venice in order to keep the enemy as busy as possible. This in turn would provide a valuable although short-lived breathing space to allow Gianfrancesco to get the Milanese to provide effective protection for the Mantovano, largely through the preparation and despatch of a large river fleet. Gianfrancesco had every reason to believe that the biggest threat from Venice would come from a river campaign. Finally, Gianfrancesco needed the urgent support and help of Niccolò d'Este whose friendship with Venice rested on very shaky foundations. Filippo Maria was constantly prompting Gianfrancesco to use all his energies in trying to detach Niccolò from the Venetians, largely through the intercession of Leonello.

In the first instance the most pressing need was to prevent Gattamelata either from taking the initiative or from being adequately reinforced from the Veronese. In this respect it was important to act before the shock of Gianfrancesco's action had had time to wear off.

As we have already seen, Gattamelata was obliged to retire somewhat precipitantly towards Brescia with Piccinino in hot pursuit. This Milanese commander does not seem to have encountered any real opposition at all; on the contrary a number of fine condottieri in the Bresciano took the opportunity to throw in their lot with the enemy,

including Donnino da Parma and Scaramuccio de Lucera, both of whom had seen considerable service in Gianfrancesco's company and whose loyalty to their old master prevented them from fighting against him. <sup>3/</sup>

It soon became apparent to Gattamelata that the Milanese were going to attempt to isolate Brescia and this is what prompted him, apart from ensuring the defences of the city itself, to make sure of the security of the areas immediately to the east, such as Verola, Manerbio, Salò and Gavardo where he was planning to concentrate all the troops he could muster from the Val Trompia, the Val di Sabbia and Franciacorta. <sup>4/</sup>

The arrival of Gianfrancesco with 4,000 men, however, swung the military balance decisively in favour of the Milanese and in order to avoid the very real possibility of defeat so early in the campaign, both the Senate and Gattamelata himself judged that the only prudent move was to retire to Brescia in order to reorganise their resources more effectively and in order to enrol more men. <sup>5/</sup> This retreat gave Piccinino a marvellous opportunity to press home his advantage and take control of the area around Salò thereby making it extremely difficult for any help to reach the beleaguered Brescia. This strategy was completed by dividing the Milanese army into two, Piccinino was to concentrate on the Bresciano while Gianfrancesco was to be sent towards the Veronese with the express intention of preventing any Venetian assistance from crossing the Mincio. He was able to concentrate his efforts initially upon the important area between Peschiera and Valleggio sul Mincio which strategically was the most vulnerable area. In effect, the role which Gianfrancesco played in Milanese service was no different from what he had done for Venice, while sending him to the Veronese, where Filippo Maria had promised him territory.

was an astute move in order to make him act with even greater determination. In view of the troubles which were to arise over these territorial promises during the year, it was also significant that Gianfrancesco was accompanied by Dal Verme. Filippo Maria was very careful to give the impression that he was not showing any undue favour to either side at this time. 6/

Although Giovanni Malavolta put up a brave defence at Valleggio, it was captured by Gianfrancesco on 20 July and the Veronese now lay open to the Milanese forces. 7/ Subsequently a very successful campaign was waged in which the whole of the area around Villafranca was captured and Milanese control of the Veronese shores of the lake was extended as far as Garda itself. The only area which presented any problem was Lazise, a Venetian stronghold, which was besieged for six days before finally surrendering. 8/

These well-planned and executed moves by the Milanese now placed the Venetians in an extremely difficult position. Communications between Brescia and Verona had now effectively been broken; the only possible alternative route due to the enemy's presence on both shores of Lake Garda was the long and perilous one around the north of the lake, a route which at that time the Milanese did not consider that the Venetians would find practicable. Yet again, as on so many other previous occasions, the Mantovano lay at the heart of these operations.

This plan of dividing the Milanese army had, therefore, yielded important results. Not only had Gianfrancesco been able to make considerable headway in the Veronese, but Piccinino had been able to complete the isolation of Brescia by the beginning of August by



concentrating on the area around Rovato and Palazzolo sull'Oglio. <sup>9/</sup>

In this respect Gianfrancesco could rest assured that for the time being the Milanese had the upper hand.

However, as far as Mantua itself was concerned, matters were not quite as simple as this. Important though the northern borders of the Mantovano had been in this stage of the war, he became increasingly worried about the threat of a river campaign along the Po. As we shall see, the Venetians were never to give up their attempts to get Gianfrancesco back onto their side, but the instrumental part which he had played in seriously embarrassing their position in Brescia can only have made them more and more determined to teach him a salutary lesson. In the first flush of their resentment at Gianfrancesco's desertion they had decided to send a very strong fleet into the Mantovano. The initial decision had been taken on 14 July <sup>10/</sup> and the news of Gianfrancesco's successes only served to quicken up preparations, possibly in the hope that such an overt threat to the most important part of the Mantovano would lessen the pressure further north. <sup>11/</sup> As the Milanese position in the north became more strongly established Gianfrancesco was to turn his attention increasingly towards the defence of his own territories; as far as Gianfrancesco was concerned, it was this more than anything else which would provide an answer to that all-important question. This was why, at least for the time being, diplomacy became more important than purely military matters. Indeed, it is very arguable that it is in the diplomatic history of this period that the true nature of the Mantua/Milanese alliance can be sought.

The safety of Mantua did not solely depend upon Filippo Maria's determination to help Gianfrancesco, although this naturally was the most important factor; it also depended upon the attitude of Niccolò d'Este to a very great extent. The main practical reason for this is that the lower reaches of the Po passed through his territories and without his complicity it would be impossible for the Venetian river fleet to make any progress.

At the end of July and the beginning of August there was much to lead Gianfrancesco to believe that even if Este did not declare himself wholeheartedly for Milan, he would at least remain neutral. Filippo Maria was very anxious to secure this, not only for the advantages it would bring to him, but also because the blocking of the Venetian river fleet might well absolve him from the necessity of preparing a river offensive of his own in order to protect the Mantovano. This was not evident to Gianfrancesco at the time but before the month of August was out it was becoming painfully obvious that the Visconti was not in a great hurry to transform fair words into facts, and that this was due as much to lack of money as to lack of inclination. Indeed, it is arguable that the financial foundations upon which the Visconti side of the war was fought were even more flimsy than Venice.

Anyhow, Gianfrancesco was the main agency through whom Filippo Maria hoped to work in order to attempt to detach Niccolò d'Este from the Venetian alliance. Niccolò's reputation as an elder statesman was very high indeed. Time and time again he had been asked to arbitrate in the disputes between Milan and Venice but, although this position implied equal friendship towards both sides, or at least a measure of aloofness, it was fairly clear both to Gianfrancesco and Filippo Maria

that the close proximity of the aggressive Venetian state was disturbing to him. This feeling was given some substance by the very fact that Niccolò himself had been party to the Mantuan alliance with Milan. The actual treaty was signed in his presence as well as that of Leonello and Uguccione de'Contrari.<sup>12/</sup> Moreover the close bond which had been established between the Gonzaga and Este families by the marriage between Leonello and Margherita was further strengthened by the birth of a son to them around the time of the siege of Lazise.<sup>13/</sup>

On paper these seem to be sound reasons for Este's falling in with Gianfrancesco and the Milanese, but in practice the situation was very much more difficult. Este could never ignore the safety of his own state and the prospect of making an open enemy of Venice was distinctly alarming for him. Even though he had connived at Gonzaga's rapprochement with Milan, he could not think of doing so himself because there could have never been any real possibility of backing for such an action, the geographical position of the Ferrarese state made this virtually impossible. In the circumstances even a declaration of neutrality would be fraught with danger. Even though Este's experience was invaluable during peace negotiations, Gianfrancesco should have realised that Niccolò was in no position to help him in matters of war. He may have recalled that in the first phase of the Lombard Wars, Este had failed to prevent the Milanese army from returning to Lombardy.

Even though it is possible that Filippo Maria was encouraging Gianfrancesco's efforts with Este, the fact that Gianfrancesco persisted is a measure of how desperate he judged his own position to be. Contrary to what Tarducci thinks, it cannot have come as a great shock to Gianfrancesco

that Niccolò had opted to continue his friendship with Venice. <sup>14/</sup>  
 From a purely practical point of view it would have been suicidal not  
 to have done so.

The keynote of the letter which he wrote to Paola in Ferrara  
 on 22 July, and published 'in tota' by Tarducci, <sup>15/</sup> is surely not surprise,  
 but fear and a growing sense of desperation. Carlo Nuvoloni, the Ferrarese  
 ambassador, had already explained fully Niccolò's reason for embarking upon  
 this course of action; principally that Ferrara was too weak to resist  
 Venice. <sup>16/</sup> The arguments which Gianfrancesco advised Paola to use  
 with Niccolò were very weak ones. All he could do was to give rather  
 vague promises of military help, of assurances that he had plenty of  
 forces at his disposal to offset any threat from Venice; <sup>17/</sup> arguments  
 which were rather insulting to a man of Niccolò's obvious intelligence.  
 This insistence by Gianfrancesco <sup>18/</sup> put Este into an extremely difficult  
 position because he was also being pressed by Venice at the same time,  
 Niccolò could not afford to delay in his dealings with Venice and the  
 best that he could promise Gianfrancesco in the last resort was an  
 undertaking to try his best not to compromise Gianfrancesco's position  
 and try to mollify Venice's attitude towards him. <sup>19/</sup>

On 29 July Uguccione arrived in Venice and convinced the Senate  
 in Sanuto's words "avere il suo Signore perfectissimo animo verso la  
 Signoria nostra". <sup>20/</sup> The Senate was so pleased with Niccolò that they  
 decided to return freely the Polesine which Este had pledged to Venice  
 for the sum of 60,000 ducats. <sup>21/</sup> It is, however, significant that it  
 was not actually returned until Este had proved his loyalty to Venice in  
 more concrete terms. It could well be that the prospect of such a reward  
 for his adherence may have been a further spur to this decision.

Unfortunately, even though Niccolò's envoy did not actually aggravate Gianfrancesco's position, we have already seen that the Senate was in a vindictive mood. The threat from Venice, therefore, was still as great as ever and, for the time being, the only thing that could be done as far as Ferrara was concerned was to continue urging Leonello to intercede with his father on Gianfrancesco's behalf.

Having failed to get adequate protection from this direction, Gianfrancesco's only hope now was to get Filippo Maria to live up to his promises. The situation was so serious that Gianfrancesco himself went to Milan on or around 30 July. The prime motive here was to hurry the preparation of the Milanese river fleet. <sup>22/</sup> On the last day of July Gianfrancesco wrote to Paola from Lodi commenting on how well he had been received and how Filippo Maria had given him good assurances of his help. Moreover he had also had a long consultation with Zenebaldo de Brolio the Mantuan envoy to Milan who was to watch over the preparations for the fleet as well as keeping a watchful eye over political and diplomatic developments. He assured his master that matters would work out to his advantage. <sup>23/</sup> However, even with Filippo Maria's goodwill and help he reminded his wife of the sacrifices they would have to make for the protection of the Mantuan state, particularly as far as the raising of money was concerned, <sup>24/</sup> and in his absence in the field, the responsibility would fall upon her shoulders. This letter is yet a further indication of the supreme trust which Gianfrancesco placed in his wife even at this moment of greatest crisis.

Gianfrancesco had been following very closely the developments which had been taking place in Venice. The Bishop of Mantua had been

relaying information about the progress made in preparing the fleet.

On 4 August Paola had relayed to him information that the preparations were almost complete. <sup>25/</sup> He was therefore not only anxious that preparations in Milan should hurry up, but he also wanted to concentrate all his resources upon reinforcing his own fleet of 21 galleys <sup>26/</sup> and keeping a close watch on the river area. This was why he was suggesting that Alvise should have reinforcements in order to keep up the pressure in the north in severing communications with the Veronese. Gianfrancesco was concerned that this would result in the fall of Brescia because the city's supplies were now perilously low. These were all requests which Filippo Maria was only too pleased to grant. In addition, Gianfrancesco promised to continue to work on Leonello to obtain his father's neutrality. <sup>27/</sup> This was to remain a continuing strand in the diplomacy of the summer of 1438 and beyond, and to this end more than one meeting was arranged with Leonello. Filippo Maria was always anxious that Gianfrancesco should capitalise on their close relationship. <sup>28/</sup> One such meeting took place on 10 August at Ostiglia and, judging from Gianfrancesco's subsequent report to Filippo Maria on the following day, Leonello appears to have been very much in favour of his father's neutrality and very willing to continue persuading him, <sup>29/</sup> even though considerable pressure was being exerted upon Este by the Papacy to keep them in the Venetian camp. However, it is very difficult to judge just how much weight Leonello's words carried with his father. It may well be, as Tarducci suggests that Leonello himself had little love for the Venetians, <sup>30/</sup> but in the final analysis the decision was not his; and although Niccolò tried, as we shall see, to remain as friendly and as uncommittal to both sides during the summer of 1438, when the time came to make the decisions he inevitably gravitated towards Venice. This is the general pattern behind the correspondence

during this period between Gianfrancesco and Ferrara, and Gianfrancesco was so desperate for help that he tended to over-react even to the slightest glimmers of hope from that direction.

However, a great deal of activity was going on in the Mantovano at this time and Gianfrancesco was now devoting all his energies towards building up the defences on the south east of Mantua, especially in the crucial area around Ostiglia and Revere on opposite banks of the Po. Judging from the number of letters he wrote from Ostiglia around this time it would appear that he was supervising much of the work personally. He was careful to keep Filippo Maria fully informed of the progress of the work, which not only involved concentrations of troops along the river banks, but also the renovation of his own river fleet, a matter about which he was in fairly regular communication with the ducal fleet commander, Pasino de Eustachio. <sup>31/</sup>

Nevertheless, while these preparations were going well, they were clearly not sufficient to give Gianfrancesco the sort of security he required. This was why, in his letters both to Filippo Maria himself and to his ambassador Zenebaldo, he was becoming increasingly obsessed with the progress the Milanese fleet was making. He also requested that Filippo Maria should send him 1,000 cavalry as reinforcements. <sup>32/</sup> Zenebaldo was now given strict instructions to report the slightest development regarding this river fleet upon which Gianfrancesco increasingly felt the security of his state to depend.

This, therefore, was a time when Gianfrancesco needed to have supreme confidence in Filippo Maria and he looked to the Visconti for

some material action which might put his mind at rest. Unfortunately, this is precisely what he did *not* get. He got plenty of promises from Filippo Maria, but the detailed reports which the punctilious Zenebaldo sent to him tended to show them up in their true light; and what is more, it was around the time that Gianfrancesco's confidence in the Visconti alliance was severely shaken by a controversy with Filippo Maria over the territories he had been promised. The fact that these two things occurred more or less simultaneously may well have not been coincidental. Filippo Maria was very well aware of how dependent Gianfrancesco now was upon him and Gianfrancesco himself increasingly came to feel that the Visconti, no doubt with the active complicity of Dal Verme, was capitalising upon this situation in order to go back upon the promises he made to him at the time of their agreement. It was in this affair that the difficulties in dealing with Filippo Maria were fully brought home to him; that he had escaped one trap only to be trapped yet again, but even more so this time because he could turn to no one else for help.

The documentation for this period is so dense that to deal with it on a strictly chronological basis would be most confusing. In the pages which follow it would be more intelligible to discuss the various strands in the correspondence as separately as possible although, of course, some overlap is inevitable.

A foretaste of territorial problems can be seen as early as 6 August when the original agreement between Gianfrancesco and Milan was ratified. The details of this have already been discussed and they remained unaltered in the ratification. There was, however, one modification in this document which at the time did not seem to be of any great significance,



but which later became very important indeed. On this occasion there was a much clearer stipulation that any territories held by Dal Verme were to be strictly inviolate. Although this clause evidently referred to the lands he had been granted in the Veronese, the wording of the clause was deliberately unspecific. It read as follows:

"Item, cum hac moderatione et additione q. ubi in suprascripto instrumento lige sit mentio q. in continentae in dicto instrumento non intelligantur persona, terre et bona Magnifici Comitis Alvysi dal Verme, que ipse comes tenebat quando recessit a servitiis domini Venetorum ubicumque sint. Immo remaneant libere dicto comiti. Intelligatur et peradditio et declaratio habeatur non solum ad bono q. ipse comes tempore dicti recessus tenebat, sed etiam ad bona que fuerunt et spectaverunt non solum ipsi comiti, sed etiam dependentibus suis."

33/

There is much to lead us to believe that Alvise had quite a lot to do with this modification. This change was being discussed in Milan even before the end of Gianfrancesco's visit. There had been some discussion of this ratification between Filippo Maria and Gianfrancesco at the time but it was judged imprudent to mention any projected alterations in the initial agreement at the time. Both Dal Verme and Filippo Maria were content to wait until Gianfrancesco returned to Mantua before advising him of this modification. <sup>34/</sup> It would appear from this conduct that there was some ulterior motive, but when this alteration was included in the document of 6 August no exception seems to have been taken to it because it was approved on the same day by Gianfrancesco. <sup>35/</sup>

This behind-the-scenes manoeuvring by Filippo Maria and Dal Verme was part of a deep laid plan to deny Gianfrancesco the territories he had been promised in the Veronese. Dal Verme had been disturbed at the possibility of a clash of interests between himself and Gianfrancesco and had determined to work upon Filippo Maria in order to eliminate his rival. It had been suggested that Dal Verme was looking to

the future with a view to feathering his own nest once Filippo Maria died. <sup>36/</sup> This may well have been the case, but as far as Gianfrancesco was concerned, what was to happen merely served to underline his fears and apprehensions at the worst possible time.

The timing of this modification is even more significant when one considers that from at least 29 July Zenebaldo had been pressing Filippo Maria on Gianfrancesco's behalf to grant his master possession of the lands already acquired in the Veronese. <sup>37/</sup> This proviso had been part of the original agreement. This request was repeated on more than one subsequent occasion <sup>38/</sup> but Filippo Maria had not made any decision on this; in fact, he had deliberately avoided giving a reply. If one takes into account the discussions which were going on between Filippo Maria and Alvise, the reasons for his silence are obvious.

At this time Zenebaldo was fairly confident that the grant of the lands would be forthcoming, but by 13 August Gianfrancesco was getting more and more impatient at this silence. He therefore decided to force the Duke's hand by sending him a letter in which he freely renounced all the benefits accruing to him from the Milanese alliance with the exception of the lands promised in Verona and Vicenza. <sup>39/</sup>

This was a bold and courageous move which could not be ignored by Filippo Maria; but the reply which was forthcoming still did not clarify his situation. In a good-natured letter dated 16 August he informed

Gianfrancesco that Zenebaldo had delivered his letter and he was very impressed with the fidelity and devotion towards him which it contained. Much of the letter is couched in such glib and unwholesome tones which seemed by now to have become a trademark of Visconti's communications with Gianfrancesco. However, Filippo Maria rejected Gianfrancesco's proposal and went as far as returning his original letter to Zenebaldo. <sup>40/</sup> Filippo Maria clearly resented being manoeuvred into such a compromising position and tried to escape from it as best he could by trying to convince Gianfrancesco that he wanted to do more and not less for him.

It was, therefore, clear that he was to get no satisfaction from Filippo Maria. Significantly, it was <sup>from</sup> Alvisé himself that he learnt the Duke's true intentions, and this may well have been part of his devious plan to get someone else to do his dirty work. On the 18th August a meeting between Gianfrancesco and Alvisé had been planned at Marmirolo. This was ostensibly to plan further operations in the Veronese across the Adige. The meeting was as harmonious as it could be between two men who were deeply suspicious of one another. However, the military plans paled into insignificance when Alvisé broke the news of Filippo Maria's territorial intentions for Gianfrancesco. The details were reported in a shocked and angry letter which Gianfrancesco wrote to Zenebaldo on the same day. The reasoning was as follows. The only logical extension of the war would be into the Padovano, Treviso and Friuli and this would involve a great deal of severe fighting. These territories would be difficult enough to hold under normal circumstances, but if Gianfrancesco were to have the territories he was promised in Verona and Vicenza, the Duke would not consider it worth the effort. Consequently, he considered proposing to Gianfrancesco that instead of Verona or Vicenza he should have either Brescia or Cremona. <sup>41/</sup>

Gianfrancesco must have had some inkling that there must have been some reasoning behind the Duke's reticence over this matter, but this revelation, judging from the remarks he made at the end of this letter, was surprising and very disturbing. In fact, it was so unsettling that he refused to make any comment at all until some further clarification had been extracted from Filippo Maria by Zenebaldo. What tended to make this an even greater blow to his morale was that it came at a time when the help which Filippo Maria was continually promising him never seemed to arrive. All he could hope for was that the Duke could be induced to change his mind over this matter. <sup>42/</sup>

In reality, however, what sort of pressure could Gianfrancesco put upon Filippo Maria? In short, none! The arrival of a large Venetian river fleet was imminent, and his own resources were inadequate to meet this threat; Este's oscillations in and out of neutrality made any aid from that quarter exceedingly unreliable despite what Leonello was doing. Although his relations with Piccinino were good, he was heavily involved around <sup>Na</sup> <sub>A</sub> Rovato at this time, and now it had become painfully obvious that Dal Verme and Filippo Maria were conspiring together, using Gianfrancesco's helplessness to minimise upon their commitment to him. The serious decline in relations with Dal Verme was further accentuated by the precedence which Visconti was giving to him in military matters, again in flagrant contravention of the original agreement. <sup>43/</sup> This was adding insult to injury, and in a bitter letter to Zenebaldo on 21 August reviewing all he had done in Milanese service in the Veronese, he said he would simply refuse to take the field under the command of Dal Verme. <sup>44/</sup> Surely by now Gianfrancesco must have been regretting his decision to side with the Milanese; his relations with Venice had never been as tortuous as this. Unfortunately, this time there was no escape, however indignant at Milanese treatment he might have been.

As well as this controversy over territorial matters, this crucial month of August shows Gianfrancesco becoming increasingly frustrated at the promised help which never seemed to arrive. The exchange of letters between Mantua and Milan throughout this period was extremely regular: on a great number of occasions more than one letter was sent per day. The subject matter of the letters is fairly repetitive, however, and deals almost obsessively with the progress being made by the Milanese river fleet. Never before had Gianfrancesco shown himself to be so openly frightened at the prospect of the damage which the Venetians could do to the Serraglio should they be unopposed. Although a regular correspondence was naturally kept up with Filippo Maria himself, the brunt of the work was borne by Zenebaldo de Brolio. Of all the experienced Mantuan ambassadors available to Gianfrancesco at this time, he had chosen the best possible man to undertake this delicate task. Not only was he highly respected in Milan and elsewhere, he was extremely conscientious at his job, as his very detailed reports show, and there had always been a very close bond of devotion and loyalty between Zenebaldo and his master.

On 14 August both Filippo Maria and Zenebaldo were giving assurances to Gianfrancesco that the fleet would soon be ready. In particular, Filippo Maria showed how important he judged this to be to his own interests as well as Mantua's. <sup>45/</sup> Furthermore, he promised that the 1,000 cavalry which Gianfrancesco had requested would be sent as promptly as possible; but due to commitments around Brescia and Rovato they could not be despatched immediately. <sup>46/</sup>

However, in the following days, and even weeks, nothing seemed to materialise. On 17 August Zenebaldo wrote of his disappointment that nothing was happening about the fleet and, what is more, he was finding it

increasingly difficult to get any accurate information about what was going on. <sup>47/</sup> This matter was becoming increasingly urgent not only because Este was moving more openly towards Venice, but also because disturbing news had reached Gianfrancesco about the size of the Venetian fleet which was being prepared. According to a letter which he sent to Milan on 18 August he stipulated over a hundred ships of various sizes. <sup>48/</sup> He therefore begged the Duke to make all possible speed to counteract such an overwhelming threat. Meanwhile he assured the Duke that he would pass on any more news about this from his contacts in Padua as soon as it reached him. <sup>49/</sup>

At the same time as all this was going on plans were being discussed to induce Francesco Sforza to fight on the Milanese side. Active attempts to enrol other condottieri were fairly common during this period. By this time it seemed fairly certain that Guidantonio Manfredi's services could be secured; the only problem here was the lack of money to pay him. Apparently his company was fairly large and Milanese finances were very meagre indeed and Gianfrancesco was entrusted with the difficult and awkward task of explaining this position to him. <sup>50/</sup>

Of all the condottieri of his time, Francesco Sforza was one of the most actively sought after. We have already seen how anxious the Venetians had been to obtain his services, in vain as it turned out. He had already had experience of fighting for Milan and Gianfrancesco considered it would not be unduly difficult to re-engage him. The fact that he still had Ludovico in his possession may well have been an added inducement here. At this time he was officially in the service of the Florentines who, at this time, were becoming increasingly disturbed at

the extent of Venetian expansionist policies, and during the latter part of August, negotiations over this between Florence and Mantua became quite active.

However, although Gianfrancesco could see the virtue of an alliance with Sforza, the whole situation was incredibly complex. Both Filippo Maria and Sforza's actions were frequently unfathomable; collectively they appeared at times to be incomprehensible. It seemed that both the parties wanted to exploit each other while paying as little as possible in return. Of course the prospect of a marriage with Bianca Visconti could still be considered superficially a great inducement to Sforza; but for the time being there was a position of stalemate here, primarily because of Sforza's ambitions further south and because Bianca's supreme eligibility as a bride had resulted in her being offered to more than one prospective suitor, including Carlo Gonzaga. On 19 August Simone Ghillino was even sent to Este to offer Bianca to his family as an inducement for his friendship. <sup>51/</sup> The possible results of a marriage with the Duke of Milan's only child, even though she was illegitimate, was certainly not lost on Sforza and were to provide much opportunity for haggling over the next few years.

However, for the time being there were two powerful obstacles to overcome. Filippo Maria had already had a taste of the problems that disagreements among his commanders could create and there was a considerable degree of resentment between Sforza and Piccinino. Piccinino's reputation was so high that he felt his own position as commander of the Milanese army would be jeopardised by Sforza if he should be engaged. Furthermore,

the Venetians had never relaxed their efforts both directly and through Florence, to conclude an agreement which would induce him to cross the Po. Gianfrancesco was kept in touch with these last developments via Rolando Suardo, the Ferrarese envoy to Mantua. This information was relayed to Filippo Maria by Zenebaldo in an attempt to make him more determined to act promptly, especially as the threats to him were escalating more and more rapidly. <sup>52/</sup> Gianfrancesco was convinced that if the Florentines could be persuaded to make a formal agreement with Milan, Sforza's engagement would soon be forthcoming. <sup>53/</sup> Commenting upon this matter to Zenebaldo, he confessed himself surprised that the Duke seemed to be lethargic over this as well, <sup>54/</sup> especially as it was a matter of the utmost importance. He urged Zenebaldo to be as persuasive as possible. It must have appeared to Gianfrancesco that he was the only person who seemed to be taking the initiative in getting the Duke to act; for instance, in the same letter he was also suggesting that reinforcements should be sent to help Dal Verme who was busy around Vigasio, just to the south of Verona. <sup>55/</sup>

Filippo Maria replied to this in the letter of 24 August. His general attitude, however, does not seem to have changed at all. He was still fairly confident over Este's friendship, <sup>56/</sup> and was still giving promises that the fleet would be ready. <sup>57/</sup> As far as Sforza was concerned, Filippo Maria protested that he had written to him on at least seven occasions and was just as surprised as Gianfrancesco was at Sforza's reticence to join him. <sup>58/</sup> He was quite happy to see Niccolò Valori, the Florentine ambassador, in order to negotiate the possibilities of an alliance, <sup>59/</sup> but although he agreed to send men to provide support at Vigasio he once again said that they could not be spared until Rovato had been captured. <sup>60/</sup> For the most part, we are still in the world of promises here at the same time as things were beginning to move in Venice.



On 25 August Niccolò d'Este went personally to Venice where he was given a full state reception. The meaning behind the letter he wrote to Leonello on this day was very clear. The Venetians were making a determined bid for his friendship now because their fleet was ready to sail. In fact, in his letter he gave his son a fairly accurate picture of its overall size and structure and it corresponded more or less to the intelligence which Gianfrancesco himself had received from Padua. <sup>61/</sup> Niccolò also indicated that the Senate had deliberately intended this massive fleet primarily as a punishment for Gianfrancesco. Clearly he had seen this for himself and, moreover, he judged that its sheer size and strength were greatly superior to anything Mantua could provide. <sup>62/</sup> It was on this visit that he was formally given back the Polesine. <sup>63/</sup> Although Niccolò had written such a detailed letter to his son in the hope that Gianfrancesco could be warned of what had happened, there was clearly no way in which he could now avoid helping the Venetians.

However, by the time this information had been relayed to Gianfrancesco by Leonello, Gianfrancesco was already fully aware of the imminence of the danger. In an anguished letter to Zenebaldo on the previous day he told him that the Venetian fleet was on the point of sailing. Even allowing for a certain exaggeration concerning numbers, the fleet was so large that it was imperative for Filippo Maria to send at least twenty ships immediately. <sup>64/</sup> He was also very upset at the news of Este's journey to Venice.

Although Gianfrancesco could voice his fears openly to Zenebaldo, his 'amour propre' did not allow him to grovel before Filippo Maria. His need of Milanese help was now more urgent than ever; moreover, he was

now extremely short of money and had to raise more funds by pawning valuables in Ferrara and Milan.<sup>65/</sup> Nevertheless he instructed Zenebaldo to put on a brave and determined front to the Duke,<sup>66/</sup> and he himself, in a nobly worded letter on 25 August, assured the Duke that he was determined to fight to the end even against such overwhelming odds.<sup>67/</sup>

Although Gianfrancesco hoped that such a show of determination would serve to prick the conscience of the Duke, he had not been completely inactive in other directions in his attempts to get some support against Venice, and these attempts were primarily directed towards Florence.

Gianfrancesco sincerely believed that a firm agreement with the Florentines would be an immense asset to Milan. While their record had not been very encouraging in the earlier stages of the war, the fact that they had Francesco Sforza was the supreme reason for their importance. Moreover, Gianfrancesco's past experience in trying to obtain Sforza while he was in Venetian service had shown categorically that the relationship between those two cities had definitely undergone a decline.<sup>68/</sup>

Although Filippo Maria had stated that he was willing to discuss matters with the Florentines, he had not as yet shown very much initiative; after all, the previous history of relationships between Milan and Florence had not exactly been harmonious either. Consequently, much of the responsibility rested on Gianfrancesco's shoulders and it was to him that their envoy Bernardo de' Medici had gone in the first instance. These were essentially exploratory talks and begun in secret on 26 August according to the report which Gianfrancesco sent two days later to Filippo Maria.<sup>69/</sup> The negotiations were exploratory in the sense that the Florentines were

by no means comfortable at the prospect of an alliance with the Visconti especially as they had heard reports that Filippo Maria was not really keeping his promises to Gianfrancesco. Moreover, they also wanted to know exactly what the position of Ferrara was in all this. Bernardo also explained that disagreements between Piccinino and Sforza and Filippo Maria's deliberately provocative behaviour as regards Bianca were still considerable barriers as far as Sforza's employment were concerned.

It was fairly clear that the Florentines thought highly of Gianfrancesco and were prepared to set much store by his judgement before a more direct approach to Filippo Maria was attempted. Anxious as he was for the friendship of Florence, Gianfrancesco could not really hide from Bernardo the truth about Niccolò d'Este, but as far as the other matters were concerned, he did his best to reassure him of Filippo Maria's intentions and emphasised especially that there was no possibility of his son Carlo marrying Bianca.

The Duke replied promptly to the report and seemed to agree wholeheartedly with Gianfrancesco's action. He affirmed that he was very willing indeed to receive any ambassador from Florence and that Bernardo would be treated with all the honours due to his status. <sup>70/</sup> Most of his letter, however, was devoted to Sforza. He realised that there were obstacles to a settlement; in fact he mentioned all three of them; the differences with Piccinino, the question of Bianca and the problems about some outstanding payments to him which Filippo Maria claimed occurred through his own financial embarrassment rather than his not wishing to pay. <sup>71/</sup> The Duke considered that the two remaining obstacles depended

upon each other; that the marriage could not take place until the differences with Piccinino had been sorted out. This is what Filippo Maria wanted Gianfrancesco to try to accomplish, <sup>72/</sup> either personally or through one of his ambassadors. However, the imminence of the Venetian fleet cannot have made this immediately feasible. Filippo Maria still did not want to take the initiative personally in this matter and the fact <sup>that</sup> the ball always seemed to be in Gianfrancesco's court, and at such a difficult time too, was profoundly disquieting and showed yet again that in reality Filippo Maria was not over concerned at relieving the already considerable pressures upon Mantua. <sup>73/</sup> In fact, the Visconti was more interested in getting other people to do the work for him in order that he could have maximum opportunity and liberty for manoeuvre. <sup>74/</sup>

In the same letter Filippo Maria was giving constant assurances about the fleet. On the previous day he had sent Gianfrancesco a letter confirming that thirty of his best ships were being prepared. <sup>75/</sup> When compared to the immense size of the Venetian flotilla even this number seemed somewhat inadequate, but when Zenebaldo wrote to his master on the same day an even more dismal picture emerged. By now Zenebaldo had grown suspicious of the ducal promises and he had consequently gone personally to Pavia to see with his own eyes what was going on. Far from witnessing the preparation of thirty of the best galleys, he discovered to his horror that orders had only been given for the refurbishing of fifteen and, what is more, discussions with the persons in charge had revealed that only eight of the smallest boats would be ready by the end of the first week in September. Instead of the 600 ducats set aside for this operation only 200 had been actually sent. <sup>76/</sup> Although orders for the preparation of the remaining ships were soon despatched, no doubt because of Zenebaldo's

visit, the fact was that Filippo Maria had been playing Gianfrancesco false in keeping his hopes alive while in reality falling short of his promises. From now on Zenebaldo was only to trust his own eyes in this matter and on the following day asked his master to estimate how long it would be before the Venetian fleet arrived at Ostiglia so that he could make sure that preparations in Pavia were on time. <sup>77/</sup> It was only on the 4th September that Zenebaldo could report with any confidence that a move was definitely being made at Pavia. <sup>78/</sup> It was only after almost exasperating insistence that anything remotely resembling satisfaction had been received from this quarter, and even then it was still not certain that the Milanese fleet would arrive in full strength at the time when it would be required.

The differences with Alvise dal Verme were basically unresolved and the only positive result which Gianfrancesco was able to extract from Filippo Maria concerned the question of the military command as in the original agreement. Once again Zenebaldo had been most insistent upon this and it paid off on this occasion. On 1 September Filippo Maria wrote to Zenebaldo that he was prepared to grant the command of the armies to Gianfrancesco in the absence of Piccinino. <sup>79/</sup> Although both Dal Verme and the Duke were in a position to dictate terms to Gianfrancesco, they did not want to antagonise him completely. Anyhow, as far as Dal Verme was concerned, this matter was of little significance when compared to the satisfaction of his territorial interests.

In this last month Gianfrancesco was unsuccessful. The approach of the Venetian fleet had, for the time being, imposed a 'terminus ante quem' on any further discussion, but not before the indignity of having had his

agreement unilaterally broken was underlined by some rather transparent attempts by Filippo Maria and Dal Verme to give a veneer or respectability to their acts and it is this which sets the seal on the sort of relationship which existed between Gianfrancesco and the Visconti.

Even though he had been more or less deprived of the lands in the Veronese and Vicentino by Dal Verme and Filippo Maria, Gianfrancesco had not yet totally given up the idea of reaching some sort of accommodation with the Duke. After all, as we have seen, Filippo Maria himself had not categorically informed Gianfrancesco of this; it had all come through Dal Verme. Neither had Gianfrancesco himself formally renounced his claims. On more than one occasion he had tried to draw Filippo Maria out into the open about this, but in vain. Although Zenebaldo continued to press for a decision, other matters for the time being tended to overtake it.

However, on 28 August Filippo Maria suddenly announced to Gianfrancesco that he had issued instructions to Dal Verme to consign to him the lands which had been acquired in the Veronese. After so much silence this was certainly a bolt from the blue and Gianfrancesco wrote to the Duke thanking him for having decided in his favour. <sup>80/</sup>

Filippo Maria's motives for the sudden change of heart, as always, are obscure. If one takes into account the collusion with Dal Verme over the previous discussions, it is very difficult to believe that he had suddenly been assailed by conscience. One can only conclude that it was yet another part of Filippo Maria's devious strategy to keep Gianfrancesco's hopes alive. After all, around this time he had been taking the initiative not only in defending his own territories, but also as far as Florence and

Sforza were concerned. Moreover, he had already suffered a measure of disappointment at the conduct of Niccolò d'Este. It was also possibly part of an attempt to put the relationship between Gianfrancesco and Dal Verme on a more harmonious footing.

However, even if this last consideration was part of Filippo Maria's plan, it did not have the desired effect; the suspicion with which he treated Dal Verme ran too deep for any lasting reconciliation. This was definitely shown in a meeting with Dal Verme at Ostiglia around this time and reported to Zenebaldo by him. In this letter it is very clear that he was very suspicious of the Duke's motives in suddenly appearing to change his mind over the territories and he warned Zenebaldo to be very alert to discover if there was some covert purpose behind these actions. <sup>81/</sup> Far from calming his apprehensions, the seeming generosity of the Duke had exactly the opposite effect of making Gianfrancesco more guarded than ever. This is shown very clearly in his letter of 30 August to Zenebaldo in which he clearly specified his conditions before he was prepared to cross the Adige. These involved the command of the army in the absence of Piccinino, the consignment of lands to Gianfrancesco as they were conquered in the Veronese and assurances that Dal Verme would not create any obstacles here. Finally, and this shows the measure of the bad relationship with Dal Verme, Gianfrancesco requested a ducal commissioner, preferably Guido Torello, to act as a go-between. <sup>82/</sup> Gianfrancesco was trying to protect his interests as far as possible, but even in this latter the limits of his ability were only too evident because he reported that he had heard that although the Venetian fleet had not yet left, the reports of its size and strength were confirmed: "più che alcuna he foresseno mai." As long as the shadow of the Venetian fleet was over him, Gianfrancesco's powers of insistence were severely circumscribed.

It was precisely this that Filippo Maria was to capitalise upon to extort finally and categorically from Gianfrancesco what effectively amounted to a renunciation of his rights beyond the Adige (Verona and Vicenza). Yet again this was the result of a concerted effort between the Duke and Dal Verme.

Gianfrancesco soon discovered that there was one condition attached to the ducal award of the territories in Verona and Vicenza. Matteo de Corrado, Gianfrancesco's envoy to Dal Verme, wrote to his master informing him that before the final transfer was made, Filippo Maria wanted the two men to discuss the matter personally.<sup>83/</sup> This seemed to be a somewhat curious request but Gianfrancesco was prepared to bow to his wishes if this would secure the desired result. The meeting took place around 31 August.

The meeting, which was reported in a letter of 4 September, cruelly dashed any faint hopes which Gianfrancesco might have had. It seems that for the second time Filippo Maria had chosen to appoint Dal Verme as his purveyor of bad news and on this occasion it was but scantily disguised. Dal Verme informed Gianfrancesco that the Duke was quite willing to allow him possession of Verona, Vicenza or Brescia and their territories. However, at the end of the war he still wished to reserve the right to decide whether to award him Brescia or Verona. Similarly, Filippo Maria reserved the right to exchange Vicenza with either Padua or Treviso if he so wished. It was only if Gianfrancesco agreed to this that the lands in the Veronese would be placed at his disposal.<sup>84/</sup> It required very little intuition to predict which cities Filippo Maria would choose. In fact, on 11 September Gianfrancesco received a visit from Alvise in which he had relayed the Duke's wish



that he should receive Treviso instead of Vicenza and he had been obliged to accept the proposal. <sup>85/</sup> He had given the lands to him with one hand and reserved the right to take them away with the other. Moreover, the geographical position of either Padua or Treviso would make their acquisition of very doubtful value.

Gianfrancesco deliberately avoided making any comment on this until Zenebaldo had received further clarification from Filippo Maria. This was a difficult time for the ambassador because he had been busy at Pavia during this period. On 2 September he wrote to Gianfrancesco that he had not yet been able to see the Duke. Nevertheless he echoed his master's anger and disappointment at what had occurred. <sup>86/</sup>

In fact, Filippo Maria was to make no comment on this matter whatsoever; at least there is no surviving document which refers to it. Filippo Maria knew only too well that he would not have to wait long before Gianfrancesco was forced to give in to Alvise without him having to lift so much as a finger. The Venetian fleet was alarming him more and more and all this occurred precisely at the same time as the startling revelations which Zenebaldo had made about the lack of readiness of the Milanese fleet. It is very doubtful that this was merely coincidental and the whole situation bristled with danger for Mantua. In the circumstances Filippo Maria's silence spoke louder than words. On 4 September he could do no other but swallow his pride and give in to Alvise with as much dignity as he could muster. <sup>87/</sup> On the same day that Gianfrancesco gave in the instructions to hurry up the preparation of the Milanese fleet were issued. The significance of this shameful blackmail was certainly not lost on Zenebaldo, who could now see clearly the game which Filippo Maria had been playing. <sup>88/</sup>

Gianfrancesco, therefore, had been outmanoeuvred, but although his resentment ran deep there was not even time to lick his wounds because reports had reached him that the first Venetian ships had been spotted at Corbole, <sup>89/</sup> and the only thing he could do now was to devote himself wholeheartedly to preparing for battle and getting Zenebaldo to ensure the quick despatch of boats, men and provisions. He himself was completing the strengthening of Ostiglia, Revere and Sermide, but still needed the better part of a thousand men as reinforcements. <sup>90/</sup> Even as late as 11 September Zenebaldo was writing despairing letters about the lies which were still circulating over the despatch of the Milanese boats, of the shortages of men and money. He, like his master, was really beginning to lose heart and fear that Mantua would never get the assistance which had been so generously promised at the time of Gianfrancesco's declaration for Milan. <sup>91/</sup>

As Gianfrancesco waited for the appearance of the Venetian fleet and the arrival of help from Milan, he must have felt sorely cheated. This one month, so richly documented, provides us with an excellent opportunity to observe the sort of way in which Filippo Maria Visconti acted. In the words of an unnamed commentator, possibly Matteo Corrado, the mind of the Duke was labyrinthine in the extreme. <sup>92/</sup> The deviousness of Visconti's actions and the increasing frustration at his unfulfilled promises made him doubt the wisdom of his decision more and more. Gianfrancesco had tried his utmost to put his state and his military experience at his disposal, he had taken the initiative over Francesco Sforza and in exploiting the possibilities of a Florentine alliance, but he had received nothing tangible in return. On the contrary, it has been patently obvious that his utter dependence had been exploited to the full in order to cheat him of the territories he had been promised.

With the approach of the enemy the time for talking was past and we must now examine how the Venetian threat was faced. At this supreme crisis it was unfortunate that Gianfrancesco's morale had been so sorely dented. Was he the servant of the Visconti or had he become his slave?

### III

#### Mantua against Venice

After so much had been written about the preparations for the Venetian fleet it is somewhat surprising that there is practically nothing of an official character about the events themselves. For these we have to rely almost exclusively on Platina and Sanuto; even Da Soldo makes no reference to the fleet. This is what Sanuto wrote:

"... essendo andata infino a Sermide, luogo del Marchese di Mantova, ivi trovarono ripari fatti pe' nimici di palate arbe. E il Marchese fece mettere grandissima quantità d'alberi con chebe di sopra a modo di chebe di nave, con uomini sopra per combattere. E volendo andar su il Capitano Pietro Loredano, Procuratore dell'Armata, gli venne incontro Taliano Furlano con assaissima gente d'arme, e fanteria innumerabile; e sulle rive eran messe assai bombarde. Pure alla fine a dispetto de' nimici l'armata passò su ma con gran fatica, e furono morti assai e feriti."

93/

As the prospects of help arriving from Milan on time gradually dwindled, it was evident that Gianfrancesco was going to have to take desperate measures either to stop the progress of the enemy fleet, or at least seriously impede its progress. We have already noted that during this period Gianfrancesco was continuously at Ostiglia and was personally in charge of preparations and fortifications. The blocking of the river and the shore batteries were, between them, very successful, given the immense size of the Venetian armada. Gianfrancesco had

obviously inspired his men to fight with ferocity and determination. He realised that he could not afford to let matters be decided on the outcome of a river battle between the two fleets because there would not be the remotest chance of success. Even with the help of the Milanese boats, which eventually arrived, they would be hopelessly outnumbered. Consequently Gianfrancesco, a true pupil of Carmagnola, had to use his fleet only as a second line of defence; and in addition to the blocking of the Po, had another well tried trick up his sleeve. This was ironically a tactic which Gian Galeazzo Visconti himself had tried against Mantua. Sanuto takes up the story once again:

"E stando così la notte, nella seconda guardia i nostri videro, che il Po era molto magro, e tuttavia andava calando. Il Capitano, come savio e discreto s'accorse dell'inganno ch'era, e subito fece dare alle trombette, e venne giù a seconda coll'armata, quando più presto poté. E non voleva stare più ivi, imperroché il Marchese di Mantova avea fatto tagliare gli argini sì del Mantovano come del Ferrarese in tanto che avanti che fosse giorno tutta l'acqua del Po era andata per quelle bocche rotte, e dove la sera era la nostra armata, non vi rimase niente d'acqua. E se fosse venuto il suo pensiero ad effetto, tutta l'armata con tutti gli uomini prendeva egli a man salva. Oltre di questo il detto traditore avea ordinato di mandare a seconda zattare per affogarli, e dietro e quello erano apparecchiate 55 galeoni suoi e del Duca di Milano, e non mancava altro, che far montare le genti su per le vie. Ma il nostro Signore Iddio e Messer San Marco non hanno voluto tanto male, e de' disegni fatti coloro sono rimasti burlati."

94\_ /

Of course Sanuto was trying to present this as a strategic retreat for the Venetian fleet, but, nevertheless, they had failed to teach Gianfrancesco a lesson. It is true to say the morale of the fleet must have been adversely affected by the illness of Loredan and his replacement by Contarini, but the defeat of the Venetian fleet

was a tribute to Gianfrancesco's determination and planning, effectively using his terrain. Apparently the level of the Po was already low for September and all Gianfrancesco had to do was to complete what nature had started. Moreover, Filippo Maria could not claim to have had any part in this success because, although the Milanese boats had finally arrived, they were not really used. Once more, by dint of self help and a certain amount of luck, the soft underbelly of the Mantovano had been spared the terrible retribution which Gianfrancesco had feared. Moreover, the imminent danger which Brescia faced and the Venetian determination to restore its communications with the Veronese meant that for some time to come, this part of the Mantovano, provided there was a reasonable degree of surveillance, would be relatively secure. It was impracticable for Venice to conduct the war on more than one front, certainly until they were to obtain Sforza's participation, a matter which was certainly not being neglected by the Venetians throughout this period. <sup>95/</sup>

As far as the war with Milan was concerned, the most important aim was to prevent the isolation and eventual siege of Brescia and to stop the enemy from making further incursions into the Veronese. By acting quickly in the initial stages of the campaign the Milanese had placed themselves in an exceedingly favourable position. All they had to do now was to keep up a constant pressure upon the already hard-pressed Gattamelata. Now the Venetian threat in the south of the Mantovano had been averted, Gianfrancesco could now carry out the strategy which he had concerted with Dal Verme which seemed to provide a shield behind which Piccinino could be given time to complete the work he had begun in the Bresciano. Obviously the Mantovano would be in the forefront in such a plan in which the next phase involved the crossing of the Adige

and threatening the city of Verona itself. This was certainly high on Dal Verme's list of priorities, but it was also necessary to safeguard not only the eastern boundary of the Mantuan state, but also an area which Gianfrancesco prized highly and whose eventual loss at the Peace of Cavriana was to be one of the biggest disappointments of his whole career. Up to June 1439 this strategy yielded a remarkable degree of success, but afterwards there was to be a sharp decline in Milanese fortunes.

During Gianfrancesco's prolonged absence at Ostiglia the war around Brescia was going well with Piccinino concentrating most of his energies on besieging Rovato, <sup>96/</sup> and capturing Monticelli, Guzzago, Iseo and areas to the north along the Val Trompia. It was evident to the Venetian Senate that it would, in the circumstances, be advisable for Gattamelata to make a strategic retreat into the Veronese where he would be able to reinforce his army and reorganise his resources. In his present state he would be unable to prevent the enemy from besieging Brescia. However, such a move proved to be very difficult, indeed impossible by conventional means, because Dal Verme and Mantuan troops had effectively blocked the route across the Mincio. <sup>97/</sup> With Piccinino's troops besieging Orzinuovi until the end of September, <sup>98/</sup> there was only one route still open to Gattamelata: that was the dangerous mountain route around the northern end of Lake Garda, a route which presented not only physical problems at this time of the year, but also passed through territory which was hostile to Venice.

The story of this perilous journey, which does not strictly concern us, is an heroic one of endurance and luck. They were only just successful, the elements were very much against them and it was only

through the valiant efforts of the Provveditori that they were given safe-conducts through hostile territory. Even so they were harried by Viscontean forces around Arco and in the valley of the Sarca which flowed into the northern end of the lake.<sup>99/</sup> This journey, which Pontano compared to Hannibal's crossing of the Alps, was even more remarkable because of the speed with which it had been undertaken. If we are to believe Sanuto's account, Gattamelata's troops were in Verona by 29 September after a journey of only five days.<sup>100/</sup> This was a great boost to Venetian morale at a time when it was sorely needed and the Senate was not slow to show Gattamelata its gratitude.<sup>101/</sup>

Although Filippo Maria had been very pleased with Piccinino's work and by now Orzinuovi had fallen, the news of Gattamelata's escape was very annoying and frustrating and this, in turn, made him even more determined to crush Brescia. The campaigning season was almost over, but he could not afford to give Gattamelata any time, so he pressed Piccinino to begin operations immediately and at the beginning of October plans were put in motion. The water supplies were severed, all access to the city was blocked and large concentrations of Viscontean troops completely surrounded the city.<sup>102/</sup> Gianfrancesco and Dal Verme were called to take part in the siege which began in earnest on 4 November.<sup>103/</sup> Gianfrancesco was no stranger to such an action; he had already considerable experience of besieging Brescia in the first phase of the war and Piccinino quite rightly considered that his experience here would be invaluable.

As in the first phase of the Lombard Wars, the siege of Brescia was the centrepiece of the campaign. Like the previous siege, the citizens put up an extremely fierce resistance, despite a lack

of resources and illness in the city. Consequently the siege was to prove a long and drawn out affair which was documented by Da Soldo in great detail.<sup>104/</sup> It would be superfluous to repeat these details here; we will merely concentrate on the part which Gianfrancesco played in these events.

He was not merely employed in an advisory capacity, although he may have well played an important part in the positioning of the troops. Piccinino certainly consulted very closely during the siege; this was the first time that they had worked together for any length of time. It would seem, from Platina's account of events, that Gianfrancesco's efforts were mainly directed to the east of the city around the Torre Lunga.<sup>105/</sup>

The ferocity of the resistance, however, was unexpected, but even so, without any further help from the Venetians, it was only a matter of time before the city would have to submit. Neither Piccinino nor Gianfrancesco for one moment imagined that the Venetians were not pursuing energetic plans to despatch Gattamelata once more into the Bresciano; and consequently, once the siege had been started they devoted much of their attention to obstructing these plans.

In fact, throughout November the Senate was actively consulting with Gattamelata over plans for relieving Brescia.<sup>106/</sup> Among the plans discussed there were projects for repeating the mountainous route to the north, sending a Venetian fleet into Lake Garda and, of course, making a more determined effort to restore communications along the southern shores of the lake. The possibility was also considered of getting Gattamelata to make a thrust into the Mantovano to divert Gianfrancesco



from helping Piccinino. This would indicate just how important an asset Gianfrancesco was to the Milanese. It would certainly be much more convenient they argued, to secure once more a crossing of the Mincio at Valleggio.

The Senate decided to keep all these options open, but on 1 December it took the definite decision of preparing to send a fleet into Lake Garda, a project which bristled with difficulties owing to the necessity of having to transport boats over difficult terrain from the Adige.<sup>107/</sup> At the same time a decision was also taken to ensure the safety of the northern land route either by negotiation or by force if necessary. In fact, during the following months all three possibilities were to be tried and Gianfrancesco was to be employed, first of all in the Val di Sabbia, and subsequently once more on the eastern boundaries of the Mantovano around Legnago.

The difficulties of Brescia meant that there was little or no break in warfare during the winter of 1438-39. On 17 December Gattamelata was already at Peneda preparing his forces to rescue Brescia and by the beginning of January 1439, according to Da Soldo, he was ready to begin operations.

"Nel mese di zenaro 1439 tutta via se apparecchia Gattamelata de secorrer Bressa e di voler passar li a quelli passi de quelli de Archo com una grande fantaria e grande quantita de farine e de biave, sperando haver spalle da Parise da Lodrone e da passar per le suoi terre e da Venir per Valdesabio".

It was now up to Piccinino and Gianfrancesco to stop him. Gianfrancesco seemed to be well placed to counteract this threat because he had been sent into the Valdisabbia in the previous month by Piccinino.<sup>109/</sup> On 15 January they began a vigorous campaign in the area, easily occupying a number of small fortresses with the invaluable help of Taliano Furlano.<sup>110/</sup> Although the fighting in the area was very fierce, successful actions like the one against Lodrone had the result of making any large scale help for Brescia impossible from this direction.<sup>111/</sup> In the end Gattamelata had to retreat once more to Peneda, leaving the Venetian offensive largely in the hands of Parisio da Lodrone.

It seemed very much to Gattamelata that the combination of Piccinino, Gianfrancesco and, to a lesser extent, Taliano Furlano, was very tough opposition indeed. Consequently he had recourse to his plan of trying to relieve the pressures on the Venetian army in the Val Trompia and Val di Sabbia by launching a series of attacks on the Mantovano, thereby forcing Gianfrancesco to rush to the defence of his own territories. Apparently the Senate was very much in favour of such a plan which could not only benefit Brescia but would also punish Mantua, and was pressing Gattamelata energetically towards this.<sup>112/</sup> However, this policy presupposed that the Venetians had the resources to keep up a fairly constant pressure on the Mantovano, and this was by no means the case. Although an expedition was sent on 4 February, the preparations to launch the Garda fleet at Torbole were well under way and the immense amount of organisation which this involved meant that it could not be adequately followed up. However, the Senate was determined to take this up again after the successful despatch of the fleet.<sup>113/</sup> While this was going on the Senate was encouraging Parisio to put up a fierce resistance to the Viscontians and to afford as much help to Brescia as possible.

By this time the only other way of bringing help to the beleaguered Brescia was for the Venetians to concentrate all their efforts on sending a powerful fleet across Lake Garda. It was an heroic project and illustrated the desperate situation in which they found themselves, having tried all other ways to break the Viscontean stranglehold. Their inability to cross the Mincio and the Milanese occupation of much of the southern part of the Veronese shores of the lake meant that they had to go a considerable distance out of their way in order to get their boats onto the lake. Much had already been written about the immense organisation involved,<sup>114/</sup> and the fact that the Venetians had to resort to a plan which under any other circumstances would be eccentric in the extreme is perhaps the most striking example of the supreme strategic position of the Mantovano and the positive disadvantages of having Gianfrancesco as an enemy. The Venetians never forgot the lengths to which they had been driven and it certainly influenced their thinking at Cavriana when they were to make sure of a foothold to the immediate south of the lake.

The labour of physically transporting some eighty boats to the lake must have been immense,<sup>115/</sup> when compared to the ease with which a Milanese fleet under the command of Biagio da Assereto, the celebrated victor of Ponza in 1435, was introduced via the Mincio.

The date of the battle which took place between the two fleets is uncertain, but it must have taken place at the end of February.<sup>116/</sup> The outcome in a sense was indecisive; losses were heavy on both sides.<sup>117/</sup> However, the Venetian fleet was so badly damaged that it was unable to proceed and had to return to Torbole. Although the Senate was determined to build up the fleet once more to its former strength it would be 'hors de combat' for some considerable time.<sup>118/</sup> By now the inhabitants of Brescia were at the end of their resources.

Venetian fortunes were at a very low ebb indeed. Gattamelata could not seem to make any headway at all against the Milanese who, in their desire to follow up their success, planned a bold move into the Veronese. In a sense, the siege of Brescia was now of secondary importance because the Milanese considered its fall was imminent, despite repeated Venetian attempts to get supplies of grain in the city.<sup>119/</sup>

This strategy involved a plan for Gianfrancesco to introduce some of his ships into the Adige at Castagnaro while Piccinino concentrated his forces at Cerea which lay some five kilometres west of Legnago. Around 20 March, 28 ships were involved in this operation. They had been prepared at Ostiglia and reached the Adige by way of the Tartaro river. It was a relatively easy matter to accomplish because the swampy ground between the Po and the Adige was fretted with navigable canals.<sup>120/</sup> This meant rupturing the dykes in two places, at Castagnaro and Malopera. They were actively opposed by a Venetian fleet commanded by Marino Contarini and Ludovico da Molini. Apparently Gianfrancesco had managed to introduce 8 ships into the Adige, and, although he was driven back initially, Piccinino came to his aid. In the meanwhile Gattamelata arrived with a very large force and on 15 April, after a great effort, the Milanese were successful and the rest of the ships were able to pass through <sup>121/</sup> and sail up the river threatening Legnago while Piccinino's army was able to pursue the retreating Venetians. This joint river/land campaign was unexpectedly successful and in the period up to the conquest of Soave on 23 May the whole of the triangle of land lying between Legnago, Verona and Vicenza had been occupied by Viscontean troops. This is how Da Soldo summed up the situation:

"Altro non scrivo senon che per tutto lo mese de mazo 1439 hebbe tutto lo Visentino e Veronese: grand mercé alla gente de quelli paesi, Veroneso e Visentino, che sono tutti partesani del Duca de Milano! Dico ch'el hebbe montagne e piano integralmente; non rimase più una sola bicchochetta, salvo Rovaredo. E Gatta Mellata non aspettò mai niente e se retirò nel seraglio di Padua; et li stasera fermo pur aspettando il secorso del Conte Francesco." 122/

The victorious Milanese army was soon at the walls of Verona itself.

This was to be the high water mark of Milanese fortunes during the war. Apart from a notable defeat for Taliano Furlano around Maderno in the earlier part of May,<sup>123/</sup> the Venetians had been pushed back on every front. The bold crossing of the Adige had in many ways surprised the Senate and it may well have been responsible for advising Gattamelata to retire into the Padovano to await the arrival of Sforza.<sup>124/</sup>

After such a bad start in his relationship with the Visconti, this success must have come as a great relief to Gianfrancesco, even though the defence of his own territories was still largely his responsibility. Moreover his relationship with Piccinino was harmonious and during this period there is no evidence for any further disagreements with Dal Verme. This last point is not surprising because from a territorial point of view the latter had got his own way, and the progress of the war in the Veronese could do nothing but good for his own ambitions.

However, behind the optimism, the writing was on the wall. In the first place the Visconti had started off the war on very slender financial resources, and as the war extended into the Veneto the costs would get higher. This constant shortage of money meant that for the most part Gianfrancesco had to finance himself, and from now on increasing

reference is made in the documentary material to the raising and despatch of considerable sums of money. As the limited resources of Mantua finally dried up Paola increasingly had recourse to selling valuables to raise the necessary cash. For instance, in January 1439 she was already experiencing some difficulty in raising 12,000 ducats in Bologna and Ferrara.<sup>125/</sup> As the war progressed and as their fortunes declined the money was to become increasingly difficult to raise; and this was especially serious in July when the imminence of Sforza's arrival meant that money was urgently needed to pay for reinforcements for Mantua because Filippo Maria had failed to send any.<sup>126/</sup>

It was the Venetian success in engaging Francesco Sforza which was to have the most baleful consequences for Milanese fortunes and in this matter Gianfrancesco's pronostications were proved only too correct. Although Gianfrancesco had made a certain amount of headway in opening negotiations with Florence and Sforza, the Visconti did not seem to want to get personally involved. This had the result of leaving the field wide open to the Venetians who were nothing if not insistent over this. Their reputation for tenacity is certainly borne out by their almost daily efforts throughout 1439 to encourage the Florentines in taking a more active stand against Milan as well as personal approaches to Sforza himself.

The Florentines had been trying to remain as aloof as possible from the conflict but were quite prepared should it suit their interests to turn either to Milan or to Venice. This had been the task of Bernardo de' Medici during this period. The relative ease with which the Visconteans made their advance into the Veneto revived all their own fears of Milanese predominance in Lombardy; and these fears were amply fuelled by Jacopo

Donato, the Venetian ambassador in Florence. This resulted in the reconstruction of the alliance between Florence and Venice on 19 February 1439, an alliance which ultimately included Eugenius IV, the Doge of Genoa, Niccolò d'Este and, finally, Francesco Sforza who was given command of the forces of the anti-Viscontean league for a period of five years. His condotta was agreed at 1,300 lances and 1,300 infantry, with payment of 17,000 florins per month. Not only was the security of all his territories in the Marche guaranteed, but he was given considerable liberty in the choice of territories on the right bank of the Po with the exclusion of Parma. In return for this Sforza was to enter the war against Milan and was to fight in whichever place the league dictated.<sup>127/</sup> It seemed that on this occasion Sforza's desertion of Milan was complete, and that the whole situation had been badly mishandled by Filippo Maria who had at one time appeared to possess all the advantages. It may well be that the way in which Filippo Maria went back on his promises as far as Bianca was concerned was a powerful reason for persuading Sforza to fight north of the Po and his success in the ensuing war had the desired result of placing him in the strongest possible bargaining position.<sup>128/</sup> Venice already had a claim on Sforza's services by virtue of his agreement with the League in November 1436, but now his participation looked very much like becoming a reality.

As the situation in Brescia went from bad to worse in March and April 1439, Venice was actively persuading the Count to come to their aid,<sup>129/</sup> and the appeals became more and more urgent as the Visconteans gradually pushed into the Veronese. In June he was ready to move and on 20th he arrived in the Serraglio di Padova where, as we have already mentioned Gattamelata had been ordered to wait for him. On his way Sforza passed

through Ferrara. His arrival brought a new access of military strength to the Venetians. The army now numbered some 14,000 cavalry and 8,000 infantry.<sup>130/</sup> They were now strong enough to make some impression on the Milanese and swing the fortunes of war in their favour.

Gianfrancesco's warning to the Duke had now become a disturbing reality, even though the interval of time between the formation of the league and the arrival of Sforza may have encouraged some false hopes. It is certainly the case that the agreement encouraged the energetic Viscontean tactics of the interim period. However, the final arrival of Sforza signalled the beginning of a new phase in the war which was to result in renewed danger to the Mantuan state.

#### IV

#### The Failing War Effort and the Peace of Cavriana

On 20 June in a letter to Giovanni Pisani, Venetian ambassador to Sforza, the Senate made a reference to secret negotiations which had been proceeding between Este and Gianfrancesco at Stellate. The Senate still wanted to get Gianfrancesco back and, with Sforza about to cross the Po, this was a psychologically appropriate moment to renew its bid.<sup>131/</sup> According to the letter Gianfrancesco had been very surprised that Este had allowed Sforza to pass without hindrance. However, in this secret meeting Este had tried to persuade Gianfrancesco that his continued support for Milan now that Venice's power had been so substantially strengthened could only result in the inevitable submission of Mantua.



Gianfrancesco needed no reminding of what might happen, but although he listened patiently to his old friend, there was no way in which he could change sides yet again without his personal sense of honour being damaged even though there were positive advantages of going back to Venice. He had made his decision and now for better or for worse he had to stick to it. This, of course, only served to anger the Senate and make it more vindictive, and this was definitely apparent in the following month when Sforza was even offered the Mantovano if he so wished.<sup>132/</sup> It was this sort of attitude which underlined the perils facing Gianfrancesco's state from now on and, as in August 1438, meant that effective support from Milan was of paramount importance. However, once again, we shall see that Filippo Maria was only a fair weather friend. As the war turned sour for the Milanese, Gianfrancesco's correspondence with Milan increasingly shows disappointment which finally turned to anger and frustration at Visconti's persistent failure to support him with men and money. Furthermore, when approaches were finally made to Venice over the possibilities of peace, Filippo Maria's assurances to Gianfrancesco about maintaining the integrity of his state were shown up in their true light. In this final section of the chapter we will be concentrating primarily upon these two factors, trying to correlate them as far as possible with the way in which the war developed.

As soon as Gattamelata and Sforza had united their forces they marched towards the Veronese and arrived at Lonigo on 23 June. Four days later it was occupied and this was closely followed by the recapture of two centres immediately to the north, Brendola and Montecchio Maggiore. Ideally they should have moved on towards Verona, but they were prevented from doing so because the whole of the area to the west was in enemy hands.

However, the arrival of Sforza and Gattamelata did have the effect of relieving the pressure on Verona because Piccinino and Gianfrancesco, fearing that the enemy would push westwards, moved to Soave where they dug themselves well in behind earthworks which extended as far as the Adige. However, a military presence was still maintained near Verona. This effectively halted the Venetian advance in this direction and meant that the only way of avoiding these fortifications was once again by way of the mountainous route across Monte Calvarina to San Giovanni Ilarione which was reached on 9 July.<sup>133/</sup> From here the Venetian army descended towards Soave and Piccinino, despite some determined resistance, was unable to prevent its advance. This surprise tactic caused some confusion among Piccinino's army and the dangers of a possible Venetian incursion into the Mantovano caused Gianfrancesco to retire across the Adige. Piccinino did likewise and although a small force was left to defend Soave, it was finally captured on 8 August. This move not only threatened the Mantovano, but also opened the way to Verona.

This represented quite a change in the military situation. Now the Milanese were being pushed back towards the Mantovano and Gianfrancesco, terrified at the prospect of such an immense advancing army, wrote desperately to Milan for help. He was doing so long before the siege of Soave had begun. For instance, on 18 July Zenebaldo wrote despairingly to Paola about his continual attempts to get some reinforcement from Milan:

"Io continuamente non cesso de solicitare apresso questo I.S. el volia spazare queste zente darne perché le se ne vadano incampo considerato quanto pericullo importa e al stato e ala persona del nostro I.S. a ritrovarsse cum cossi poca zente contra a tanti millaia e da cavallo e da piedi, e quanto se ne sia doluto el capitano che la S. sua non le manda soccorso de zente non vel poria dire." 134/

As usual Zenebaldo got promises but no action because of a lack of money. His anger and frustration at Filippo Maria's unwillingness to act in the face of danger is most evident in this letter. 135/

Although this did not augur well for the future, for the time being the Senate was more worried about relieving Brescia rather than waging a full scale campaign in the Mantovano. Sforza turned his attention to the Riviera Gardesana and occupied himself with reconquering the area around Bardolino. This campaign was cut short by illness in the Venetian army and around 30 August he was back at Zevio on the banks of the Adige, just to the south east of Verona. 136/ This in turn caused Gianfrancesco and Piccinino to fortify their position at Vigasio to obstruct any enemy movements either to the south or towards the Mincio, the key to the liberation of Brescia. 137/ Gianfrancesco was to hold this position for some time.

A fierce campaign was also being fought to gain control of the lake at the same time. Here the Milanese were rather more successful. The fleet which had been reconstructed at Torbole was ready to sail and it was hoped that it could meet up with the land forces at Bardolino. This was not possible because Sforza had to retire and consequently the Viscontean fleet was given time to reinforce Salò on the opposite bank

of the lake, the most convenient point of disembarkation for any move to help Brescia. The Venetian boats had sailed as far as Madero and this threat was such that Piccinino, Gianfrancesco and a contingent of his forces transferred to Salò to reinforce its landward position. It was important to stop the Venetians at this point because the situation in Brescia was intimately bound up with its outcome. On 26 September, in a finely concerted joint action by land and water the Milanese were able to defeat the Venetians at Madero and Taddeo Marchese, one of the finest soldiers, was taken prisoner.<sup>138/</sup> Once again a considerable proportion of the Venetian fleet had been destroyed and their bid to gain control of the lake had failed. Some three days earlier the fortress of Lodrone had fallen to the Viscontians.

Yet again all easy communication with Brescia had been made impossible, but as long as the northern route lay open Piccinino could not relax. Consequently he wished to follow up his success by an expedition to Riva at the end of October.<sup>139/</sup> Although it started off successfully, the arrival of Sforza and Gattamelata soon changed this. The Venetians had assembled their forces at Arco, but because Riva was in enemy hands together with the fortress of Tenno, a stiff battle was inevitable. Although the Viscontians held strong positions they were finally dislodged by Sforza and in the battle which ensued on 9 November the Milanese suffered quite a crushing defeat.<sup>140/</sup> Gianfrancesco, still holding the Milanese position to the south of the lake, learnt that among the many prisoners taken in the Viscontian retreat, was his own son and heir Carlo, whose participation in the war his father for some time had come to regret.<sup>141/</sup> As we shall see, it was not until the following February that he was to obtain his final release. Carlo's capture, together

with his continued alienation from Ludovico, were serious preoccupations during this period. He had consistently maintained a hostile attitude towards Ludovico and it may well be that his worries about the succession began to mollify his attitude towards him.<sup>142/</sup>

Sforza soon laid siege to the fortress of Tenno and Piccinino just managed to escape in a rather humiliating fashion,<sup>143/</sup> and rejoined Gianfrancesco at Peschiera where they planned their next move. It was to be a serious bid to capture Verona. A certain amount of pressure had been kept up at Verona throughout this period, under Gianfrancesco's supervision. Even before the attack began in earnest in November, the Veronese were beginning to get alarmed. In September matters were made worse by the outbreak of a plague and a constant stream of requests for help was reaching Venice.<sup>144/</sup> This constant pressure of Gonzaga's troops was clearly wearing them down. Anyhow, on 17 November, this surprise attack resulted in the capture of the citadel and the Veronese population was too alarmed to put up any real resistance.<sup>145/</sup> The only fortresses which remained in Venetian hands were those of Castelvechio, San Pietro and San Felice. On 18 November the Senate sent a letter to Sforza and Gattamelata urging them to go to Verona in all haste.<sup>146/</sup> The quick transportation of so many men was no easy task, but Sforza left first with a small force of some 500 men, closely followed by the rest of the army. He reached the fortress of San Felice late on 19 November and quickly took charge of affairs. He was soon joined by Gattamelata and their swift action took the enemy completely by surprise. It had been estimated that Verona was recaptured by the Venetians within the space of 43 hours,<sup>147/</sup> much to the joy of the Senate. The Mantuan contingent seems to have suffered most in the rout. Gianfrancesco was obliged in the retreat to leave behind quite a large number of men who

were subsequently taken prisoner. In fact, most of the 800 prisoners were Mantuan,<sup>148/</sup> including a number who had been called especially from the city to take over the administration of Verona.<sup>149/</sup> There was nothing else to do but to retreat to Vigasio once more to try to reform in order to check the enemy's advance.<sup>150/</sup> All the Milanese gains in the Veronese were now effectively lost and the war now moved towards the Bresciano.

The winter of 1439 was very cold and the respective armies should have retired into their winter quarters, but the fight for Brescia had become so fierce by now that neither side was going to give up. The parlous situation in which the inhabitants of Brescia found themselves would not allow any kind of truce. For instance, at the beginning of December Piccinino was active in Rovato, the Val di Sabbia and Franciacorta trying to make doubly sure that no supplies reached Brescia. According to Da Soldo, this was a very ferocious scorched earth campaign,<sup>151/</sup> but the Val di Sabbia was already being gradually occupied by the Sforzeschi and Piccinino lost some 300 cavalry and 500 infantry in engagements with Sforza's captains Troilo de Rossano and Ciarpellone.<sup>152/</sup>

The Venetians seemed everywhere to be redoubling their efforts. It was a war of exceedingly swift movement, with Sforza busily at work ensuring communications around the north by trying to secure Arco,<sup>153/</sup> while Gattamelata was supervising the refitting of the fleet at Torbole. As the new year and decade dawned Gianfrancesco realised that now most of the running was being made by the Venetians. With the loss of the Veronese Filippo Maria's territorial promises no longer had any real meaning for him. On the contrary his main preoccupation now was to be the preservation of the integrity of the Mantua state. During the period of active

campaigning the diplomacy had been rather low key; but as the pressures upon the Mantovano increased and as the possibilities of peace began to be discussed, the Mantuan ambassadors were to be active once again.

Although 1440 saw the effective retirement of Gattamelata from the military scene, due to illness and old age,<sup>154/</sup> this did not in any way imply any lessening of effort or weakness in the Venetian camp. Anyhow it could be argued that Sforza had been gradually taking more and more of the initiative since his participation in the war had begun. In fact, the year was to be extremely fruitful for the Venetians; not only was Brescia finally liberated in June, but the Venetian fleet gained control of Lake Garda and communications to the east of Brescia were finally restored.

On the contrary, if there was any lessening of interest, it was to come from Filippo Maria himself. Not only did he send Piccinino into Tuscany at a most inopportune moment, but a combination of lack of money and a growing preoccupation with the idea of exploring a profitable peace for himself further sapped Gianfrancesco's confidence in his master. This tended to be reinforced by Visconti's attitude to Francesco Sforza who, as an individual, thereby gained more from the war than anybody else.

Gianfrancesco was increasingly driven to rely upon his own resources and, apart from a brief absence with Piccinino at Torbole in a vain attempt to impede the refurbishing of the Venetian fleet in January,<sup>155/</sup> he remained very much in the Mantovano attempting to ward off the worst effects of the Venetian threat around Lonato and Peschiera. Such a limited commitment by Gianfrancesco did not contravene in any way the

terms of his agreement with Milan. He was not expected to fight personally unless he wished to and, furthermore, he was not obliged to give the Viscontean forces any further help once the Bresciano and Cremonese were occupied. As always, the defence of his own territories was always his primary aim and this was reiterated on the two subsequent occasions in April and May when the agreement with Milan was renewed.<sup>156/</sup> His morale got lower and lower as his requests for military, monetary and diplomatic aid achieved no effective response, only the by now customary promises. At the same time he was in constant touch with Ferrara trying to monitor the protracted peace negotiations.<sup>157/</sup>

Very high on Gianfrancesco's list of priorities at the beginning of 1440 was the release of his son Carlo. After his capture he had been imprisoned in the Castelvecchio in Verona,<sup>158/</sup> but Gianfrancesco immediately opened negotiations with Sforza over terms for his release. Naturally Sforza had to consult very closely with the Senate over such an important prisoner. Apparently he had been quite content to exchange Carlo for Domenico Malatesta, but the Senate considered that the value of the latter was such that Gianfrancesco should release Taddeo Marchese, Galvano de la Noza and a number of other captains. The Venetians were also inclined to use their possession of Carlo as a lever by which Este could continue to persuade Gianfrancesco to reach an agreement with them.<sup>159/</sup> This, however, did not prove feasible and the Senate left the final decision up to Sforza who opted for a straight exchange with Malatesta.

The arrangements were completed on 2 February,<sup>160/</sup> and two days later Gianfrancesco wrote joyfully to his wife from Peschiera "e non faremo dubio che per tuto domani sera li".<sup>161/</sup> The return of Carlo was most



encouraging for Gianfrancesco at a time when he needed as much help as possible because it was precisely at this time that Filippo Maria suddenly sent Piccinino into Tuscany. On 4 February he left Lombardy, entrusting the command of the remaining troops to Taliano del Friuli and Dal Verme.<sup>162/</sup> On 3 March he entered Bologna with 3,000 cavalry and subsequently waged punishing campaigns in Tuscany, the Perugino and Umbria.

This seemed to be an extraordinary move by the Visconti. It seemed incredible that he would even contemplate sending his own commander away at a time when Milanese fortunes in Lombardy were on the wane. It effectively left the Viscontean army without an overall commander and there was no possibility of inducing Gianfrancesco to undertake any new responsibilities at a time when his own territories were so severely threatened. A number of explanations have been put forward to justify this. It had been suggested that relations between Piccinino and the Duke were none too harmonious and that he was suspicious of his ambitions. This, however, does not seem to accord with the Duke's subsequent actions. It is possible that it was part of an attempt to break up the anti Viscontean league, seeking by directing operations towards the Marche, to draw Sforza away at a time when Gattamelata was fading from the scene. This certainly became more obvious in the following June.

This was not the first time that Filippo Maria suddenly seemed to change course. It certainly had the effect of bewildering the enemy, but there was always a powerful reason for such an action. It was most likely that it was done primarily for Sforza's benefit; but not only to threaten. One of the major stumbling blocks in his attempts to secure Sforza had been the latter's rivalry with Piccinino. His removal from the scene may well have been intended to facilitate a renewed attempt.

After all, on 31 December 1439 Franchino and Guarnerio da Castiglione were given a commission to sort out differences between the two men and to promise to consign Bianca to Sforza as soon as was practicable.<sup>163/</sup> There had been no response at the time from Sforza and, whatever Filippo Maria had intended his reaction to be in the following February, the result was negative as far as Milan was concerned. Sforza preferred to play a waiting game and capitalise upon the advantages of his position in Venetian service for the time being, especially in the light of the territorial promises the Venetians had made to him. However, this still required Sforza to keep his options open to a certain extent, and a regular contact was kept up with Filippo Maria.

All this tended to exacerbate Gianfrancesco's position. From a military point of view he was in an extremely exposed position because he considered that Sforza would now think it worth his while to push through the Mantovano to reach Brescia and in the light of the continuing discussion it was difficult to foretell what Sforza would do. It was fortunate that, despite the Senate's impatience for a quick move, Sforza, prudent as always, concerned himself with the organisation of supplies at Torbole and their transportation to the other side of the lake, where they were sent to Brescia via the valley of the Ledro. Anyhow, Sforza was interested in hearing about the progress Piccinino was making.

At the beginning of April the Milanese were also building up their fleet. On the 5th Filippo Maria's envoy Cristoforo Gallina was sent into the Mantovano to supervise the transfer of boats from the Po into Lake Garda in order to reinforce the existing fleet and Gianfrancesco was requested to give him every assistance.<sup>164/</sup> It still seemed for the time being that the biggest threat would come via the lake.

Anyhow, during the middle of this month Gianfrancesco considered that the situation in the Mantovano was secure enough to permit him to go to Milan, partly, no doubt, to try to negotiate personally with Filippo Maria over the question of men and money, but also in order to renew his agreement with him, to clarify still further his degree of commitment in the light of possible threats to his state. He had definitely returned by 25th because the position had once more become threatening.<sup>165/</sup> As far as Filippo Maria's attitude was concerned Gianfrancesco had returned from Milan encouraged by promises of help, but the most momentous event of the visit was the reconciliation between Gianfrancesco and Ludovico which took place on 14 April. This was an unexpected event, engineered by Filippo Maria to ingratiate himself with Gianfrancesco still further.<sup>166/</sup> It had been a long time since father and son had last met and much had changed since then. Ludovico had matured considerably during these years and had gained valuable military experience in Tuscany in Sforza's service.<sup>167/</sup> It had been suggested that Vittorino da Feltre had had a hand in these happenings. He had certainly befriended his wife during the difficult years of her husband's exile.<sup>168/</sup> Judging by the fuller letter which Matteo de Corrado wrote on the following day it was a very touching reunion at which Gianlucido was also present.<sup>169/</sup> It seems that Gianfrancesco was prepared to forgive his son's past conduct. In Matteo's words: "La ex. tia de questo si monstrò singular domestegheza al ditto Messer Lodovigo. E domane, deo dante, dieno andar a Gusago. E domenega se die disenare a casa de Vitaliano Bonronici, dove se apparecchia de fare uno bello pasto, e una bella festa."<sup>170/</sup> In the following days they spent a great deal of time getting to know each other again. He was later reconfirmed as Gianfrancesco's heir.<sup>171/</sup> In the following month Filippo Maria invested Ludovico with the feudality of Orzinuovi in perpetuity, no

doubt to give him a personal interest, like his father, in ensuring that the Venetians made no progress here,<sup>172/</sup> and to encourage his continuing loyalty. After all his disappointments it was at least a comfort to Gianfrancesco that his family was at last reunited. In June 1441 a son was born to Ludovico and Barbara. He was appropriately named Federico after the Emperor Frederick III, and was the first of at least eleven children. At least Gianfrancesco could rest assured that the succession was secure even though the state to which he would succeed was by no means certain.

However, the pressures of the moment did not allow any sort of family life for Gianfrancesco. Ludovico's return to the fold was opportune in so far as he could be used in the struggle against the advancing Sforza and it became urgent for Ludovico to settle his affairs in Milan in haste and return to Mantua. This was something which he was only too willing to do because it was his new found inheritance which was at stake.<sup>173/</sup>

This was just as well because the end of April brought the possibility of Sforza's intervention in the Mantovano even nearer, just as Gianfrancesco had feared. Earlier in the month the Venetians had finally established their ascendancy in Lake Garda. Around 10 April the Torbole fleet encountered the Milanese fleet and according to Sanuto a very closely fought battle ensued. However, on this occasion the careful preparations paid off and Stefano Contarini finally defeated the enemy, pursuing the scattered remains of the Milanese armada as far as Riva.<sup>174/</sup> This was one of the last Viscontean bases at the northern end of the lake and after a siege lasting nearly a month it

finally fell on 23 May.<sup>175/</sup> The result of this was that the shores of the lake, with the exception of the Mantuan side, were now firmly in Venetian hands. This meant that now supplies could reach Brescia without any hindrance and its liberation was imminent.

While all this was proceeding Sforza had made no decisive move and Gianfrancesco was waiting to see what he would do. At this time he was trying to get as much information as possible about Sforza's intended movements. Particularly important in this respect was Carlo Nuvoloni, one of his ambassadors in Ferrara. During the months which followed both he and his colleague Francesco Calcagnini were to be heavily involved in monitoring Venetian policy, capitalising upon Este's friendship and trying to get him to intercede with the Venetians or Sforza himself on Gianfrancesco's behalf. At the same time Zenebaldo and Corrado in Milan were constantly pressing for help from Filippo Maria which seldom came. All this activity was proceeding against the background of the continuing war, Sforza's success, the Visconti's attempts to get him onto the Milanese side, and the early exploratory peace negotiations. All in all, it is a very complex and active period for Mantua, and one of anguish for Gianfrancesco in particular.

On 30 April Nuvoloni wrote that he had heard that Sforza was intending to move towards Vigasio. He advised Gianfrancesco of the dangers which this implied and of the necessity of reinforcing this area.<sup>176/</sup> On the 15th of the month Sforza had been in Venice and it was a very important element in the Senate's overall strategy to point Sforza in this direction.<sup>177/</sup> Gianfrancesco immediately relayed this information to Milan asking for '200 bone cernide', more men in the Bresciano under

Dal Verme's command, and 10,000 ducats in back pay. He also planned to send 1,000 cavalry to Legnago in order to obstruct any crossing of the Adige.<sup>178/</sup> Matteo replied politely that these requests had been noted but gave no guarantees that any aid would be sent.

In fact, Sforza did not move until the beginning of June because a joint campaign was planned to liaise with the rest of the Venetian army when Riva had finally been captured. During this time of waiting Gianfrancesco was in constant touch with Ferrara over latest developments. Francesco Calcagnini had been in close contact with Leonello over the possible strength of Sforza's army and what chances there were of success in the event of a battle. By 16 May no help from Milan had been forthcoming and the result of the discussions with Leonello and Ugucione de'Contrari was that in the circumstances it would be ill-advised to prevent the passage of Sforza towards Brescia unaided.<sup>179/</sup> At the same time Gianfrancesco had communicated all this to Matteo Corrado and on 21 May Filippo Maria himself replied to Gianfrancesco in the following way:

"Veduto ha scripto la f. vra.a lo egregio suo consigliere Matheo de Corradi del passo lo quale sente gli debe essere rechesto per lo andare del Conte Francesco a le parte de soto, dicamo che a nuy pare e piace. che la f. vra. gli conceda el dicto passo, como habiamo facto respondere al dicto Matheo." 180/

He goes on ironically:

"E tra vuy e nuy, non conveneno queste subtilitate però che nuy sempre reputaressemo che tuto quello facesse la Ex. vra. lo facesse a bono effecto et per bene del stado vro. e nro., como ancora siamo certi che reputaresti vuy el simile de tuto quello facessemo nuy."

As a mark of his goodwill three days later Filippo Maria nominated

Pietro Visconti to raise supplies and men to be at the disposal of Gianfrancesco. 181/

On the surface, the advice which Filippo Maria gave to Gianfrancesco about letting Sforza pass through his territories is very curious indeed. Why should he want to facilitate the relief of Brescia after such a great deal of effort had been expended on besieging it? It seems contradictory in the extreme; but equally curious is Sforza's own apparent reluctance to move to the relief of Brescia despite the promptings of the Senate for quicker action. Why, if the Senate had promised the Mantovano to Sforza, was Calcagnini so adamant that his sole intention was to pass through rather than overrunning it and that no harm would befall these territories <sup>182/</sup> if Gianfrancesco did not impede his passage?

This correspondence is yet another indication of the ambiguous position of Sforza. The only reasonable explanation for all this is that Filippo Maria was very confident of being able to persuade him to throw over the Venetians. Gianfrancesco for whom Sforza personally had a great deal of respect, had played a significant role in trying to achieve this; Ludovico, his heir, had been closely associated with him. Sforza's subsequent actions clearly indicated that he was not as anxious as the Senate to subdue the Mantovano completely. When, on 3 June, he crossed the Mincio, he did no damage at all to the Mantovano, nor did Gianfrancesco attempt to stop his transit.

It could be argued that Visconti's advice and Gianfrancesco's inaction were a demonstration of goodwill towards Sforza, but surely more concrete assurances must have been forthcoming for such an action to be tolerated, an action which had such damaging consequences to the Milanese war effort and could be so perilous to the Mantovano. It

will never be possible to find out the complete explanation for this, but a clue can be sought in the correspondence for the end of May and the beginning of June 1440.

During this period Filippo Maria, through Antonio de Becharia, was redoubling his efforts in Ferrara to construct an anti Venetian league in which the prime catch was to be Sforza. It is very clear from numerous references in Calcagnini's letters, that the Este, particularly Leonello, but also Niccolò, were getting severely disillusioned with the Venetian alliance as they had been in 1438.<sup>183/</sup> The Senate had been considerably angered by the defection of Borso d'Este to the Milanese side earlier in the month,<sup>184/</sup> but at least on one occasion Calcagnini reported that there was widespread approval for what he had done in Ferrara itself.<sup>185/</sup> There was a great deal of discussion with the Florentine envoys over this matter and the reports which Calcagnini sent to Gianfrancesco indicate very clearly a great deal of optimism. This is what he wrote on the 21 May 1440:

"Illustre Signor mio. Io non vidi questo S.mai meglio disposte a far ben. quanto hora: have dicto aperte chel voria vedere questi Venetiani in totu summersi. Et che lha attastado li fiorentini et etiam el conte a pigliar el desiderato partito, li quali el trova non punto desperati, immo ben disposti: pur che la confidentia del duca ge fusse".<sup>186/</sup>

Calcagnini went on to write that matters might well be expedited even further if Filippo Maria were to withdraw Piccinino from Romagna and Bologna and he pointed out that it would also be helpful if Gianfrancesco could get the Duke to give some other material evidence of his goodwill to the Florentines and Sforza.<sup>187/</sup> A stumbling block to any negotiations



with Filippo Maria was his past history of untrustworthiness and yet again Gianfrancesco was to act as the go-between as his state was to be the testing ground for the truth of the assurances which were eventually given.

As far as Gianfrancesco personally was concerned, there was a great deal of negotiation at all levels about guarantees of security for the Mantovano. Not only was Becharia himself pressing for this, but, perhaps more than anyone else, Leonello, of whose efforts Calcagnini spoke very highly.<sup>188/</sup> Furthermore Carlo Nuvoloni was conducting negotiations with Sforza's agent in Ferrara over this matter, with very optimistic results.<sup>189/</sup> All in all, by the end of the month, during the very period that Sforza was biding his time, the reports which reached Mantua gave great cause for reassurance that not only would the Mantovano be safe, but that the prospects for an anti-Venetian league were very good indeed.<sup>190/</sup>

The clearest statement of Filippo Maria's intentions is to be seen in a letter which he wrote to Gianfrancesco on 2 June 1440 summing up the achievement of the previous month. By then Antonio Becharia had returned to Milan from Ferrara with the news that Ferrara, Florence and Sforza were well disposed to a league which, if Filippo Maria was agreeable, could also include Genoa as well as Mantua.<sup>191/</sup> The ultimate aim of such a league was made perfectly clear:

"facta la dicta liga ala quale ne conforta  
che vogliamo attendere cum fare presto, lo  
prefato Conte Francesco se ne andava nel Reamo,  
et la casa sua a le parte de sotto, et lo  
capitaneo nostro puoteria ritornare ala parte  
de qua cum tute quelle nostre gente, et alhor a  
se puoteria andarsene a campo et a Verona et a

Padua (promised to Gianfrancesco) et fare  
 quello a li inimici nostri che se sforzano  
 fare a tuti noi Signori de Italia cazandoli<sup>192/</sup>  
 fino in l'aqua".

This is perhaps the plainest evidence to date of the way in which the Visconti was playing Sforza off against Piccinino and, as far as Sforza was concerned, the Mantovano as well as Bianca was one of the pawns in this game. This is why this period was such a tense one for Gianfrancesco; he initially stood to lose most if such a policy failed. Also, the whole scheme is another example of how skilfully Filippo Maria could conceive a plan which could work on more than one level. It was not only designed to work on Ferrarese discontent with Venice, but also actively to forment suspicion between Sforza and Venice.

The trouble was that although it proved relatively easy for Filippo Maria to get Piccinino out of the way, Sforza was altogether a different matter. Here Filippo Maria had met a man whose deviousness and sense of opportunism most closely matched his own. In the final analysis Sforza's conduct in the war was not so much as a faithful servant of Venice or as the prospective servant of Milan, but as the most faithful servant of his own ambitions. We see, therefore, the intriguing situation of a double game being played by the two most important men in Lombardy at the time; both are of inestimable value to each other, and both have a talent for jockeying for a favourable position. It is not surprising as a consequence that unexpected events tend to happen in such a situation.

Even before Sforza moved there were definite signs that his adherence was not in reality going to be such an easy thing to accomplish. On 1 June Calcagnini wrote that a certain unnamed 'amico' of Ugucione de'Contrari had been discussing the recent negotiations at length with one of Francesco Sforza's secret envoys who had overheard a conversation in which Sforza himself had been extremely cynical about Visconti's motives; that he had always been a past master at the art of the empty promise.<sup>193/</sup>

In the light of all this, it is very easy to view Sforza's actions more and more as those essentially of a free agent. On 3 June he crossed the Mincio and went, contrary to expectation, northwards towards Lake Garda. On the 5th he had reached Rivoltella from where part of the army went to recover Salò and the surrounding area, causing the Milanese to retreat beyond Bedizzole, capitalising upon his numerical superiority.<sup>194/</sup> Finally, the way to Brescia lay open and at last, around the 10th of the month, the citizens of that brave city could throw open their gates to welcome their liberator. However, Sforza was more concerned with driving the enemy back than making a triumphal entry into Brescia. He wished to clear the whole area of Milanese troops, pushing them first across the Oglio and then ultimately across the Adda. There was little or no resistance, one by one all the important fortresses fell: Ghedi, Verola, Poncarole, Alghise, Manerbio, Gottolengo, Montichiari and Calvisano. The advance of the Sforzeschi was irresistible. Some fortresses, like that of Chiari, were abandoned by the Milanese even without a show of resistance. Filippo Maria, in desperation, sent reinforcements to Crema, Cremona and Lodi and encouraged the citizens to put up a vigorous defence against the enemy,<sup>195/</sup> but by now the damage had been done. It was with justification that Da Soldo could

say: "E cossì hebbeno per tutto zugno tutta Gera d'Ada".<sup>196/</sup>

Visconti's plan of playing Sforza off against Piccinino had been very badly misjudged and it is hardly surprising that he was now desperate to get Piccinino back to Lombardy once more.

This devastating success was extremely alarming for Gianfrancesco because in a very real sense the Mantovano was now cut off and this was the direct result, moreover, of Filippo Maria's miscalculation. In spite of Este's continual assurances of support, he was now very much in Sforza's hands. For his part Filippo Maria was still continuing his efforts at Ferrara to find out what Sforza's true intentions were. According to a letter which Calcagnini wrote to Gianfrancesco on 29 June Este felt that there were still grounds for an amicable solution if only Bianca was handed over to him.<sup>197/</sup> At the same time Sforza's chancellor Battista da Montecchio was in Venice discussing with the Senate Sforza's terms for continued friendship, which included paying him the money he was owed and investing him with the lands he had conquered in the Cremonese.<sup>198/</sup> Sforza was manoeuvring himself into such a position that he could offer himself for sale to the highest bidder.

Although Gianfrancesco had not impeded Sforza's passage through the Mantovano he was now in a position of needing help badly. On 13 June Carlo was sent north to Lonato to guard the area around Calcinato,<sup>199/</sup> while Ludovico had been monitoring events on the Adda front.<sup>200/</sup> The concentration of Milanese troops along the river combined with the unusually high level of the water for that time of the year did serve to halt Sforza's advance. The important question for Gianfrancesco was where he would turn to next. The situation looked none too promising because according to

Sanuto Casalmaggiore, Viadana and Marmirolo were occupied by the Venetians by the end of June.<sup>201/</sup> If this was an indication of the direction of the enemy's strategy Gianfrancesco had every right to be frightened because Corrado was writing to his master of the financial difficulties in Milan at the time. He reported on 27 June: "De continuo se retriize più le borse in forma che mi stago senza speranza de posser havere dinaro alcuno".<sup>202/</sup>

On the following day Carrado informed Gianfrancesco that Sforza had moved towards Caravaggio and Treviglio and it seemed that he was intending to move towards Cremona. This, for the time being, represented something of a reprieve for the Mantovano.<sup>203/</sup> On 1 July Caravaggio had been captured, only the 'rocca' still held out. However, among the casualties was Sforza's own brother Leonello who had sustained fatal injuries in the attack. Even Corrado was speculating on Sforza's next move, and praying that it would be towards the Cremonese.<sup>204/</sup> The tensions of these days is reflected graphically in the correspondence. Matteo's despatches made it perfectly clear that Gianfrancesco could expect little material help from Milan because Filippo Maria was in considerable difficulties in providing for the safety of the Milanese itself. He could not be sure that Sforza would not cross the Adda, taking the war nearer to Milan than it had ever been before.<sup>205/</sup> Ludovico, on the banks of the Adda at Rivolta in the Cremonese had asked for money in vain; neither could Gianfrancesco himself give any money because Mantua's resources were now exhausted.<sup>206/</sup> All in all Mantua's fortunes had now reached rock bottom and despite Calcagnini's frantic efforts to get the Este to do something, the situation appeared to be hopeless. All that Calcagnini could offer in his letter of 3 July was advice which he could relay to the Visconti in a last ditch effort to get Sforza's support. He suggested

that there were a number of alternatives open:

".. o deliberasse de havere el conte per tutto suo dagandoghe effectualiter questa Madonna Bianca, che credo più tosto sia sta uno diavolo mandato in terra a desfatione del cielo, facendolo segno ad ogni suo modo, se ben ge devesse dare el Castello de Porta Zobia nele mane a sua segurezza. Overamente trovare dinari a bastanza cum summa celeritade per mettere in punto le sue zente darne e le nostro, cum quelle del capitano ge sono restadi, sel virà e possendole menar de qua, chel ne fu dubio che le zente del Papa, e Fiorentini non ge togliaano la via... Aliter non vede via che bona sia a salvarse: vogliando el conte insieme cum Venetaini proseguire ala seconda victoria". 207/

At this point Filippo Maria, whose actions had done nothing to encourage the slightest degree of confidence from Gianfrancesco, added insult to injury by asking him to provide men for the defence of Cremona. The insensitivity of such a request was made very clear to the Duke by Corrado,<sup>208/</sup> but this did not stop him making the official request on 6 July.<sup>209/</sup> In fact Gianfrancesco's attitude to this was shown only two days earlier when, far from being unwilling to send men, he requested Corrado to get the Duke to send Ludovico back to the Mantovano.<sup>210/</sup> He had, in fact, returned by 11 July.

All this speculation was soon to end. Around 3 or 4 July Sforza broke camp. Leaving for the time being the projected crossing of the Adda, he went south. On 7 he was between Crema and Castellone and he began a campaign designed to establish his position to the north of Cremona, but it soon became evident that his operations would include the Mantovano.

Although Gianfrancesco, through Corrado, assured Filippo Maria that he would try to defend their joint interests to the best of his ability,<sup>211/</sup> the next weeks showed just how limited his ability was compared to the strength and determination of Sforza.

By 8 July Gianfrancesco was already writing to the Duke that for the time being the defence of Cremona was not a first priority "perché el Conte Francesco e levato de quelle parte e vene ali danni mei".<sup>212/</sup> Moreover, he protested in the very same letter that a lack of money, including payment from Milan that had never been received, prevented him from being in a position to defend his territories, or indeed Filippo Maria's, adequately.

He got plenty of sympathy from Ferrara during this period; for instance, on 9 July Este was trying to convince Gianfrancesco that it was not really Sforza's intention to overrun the Mantovano completely.<sup>213/</sup> It is true that later on in the month Leonello was trying to raise some material help for Gianfrancesco, but in the final analysis it amounted to little<sup>214/</sup> The Florentines were apparently angry at the Venetian success but this was not translated into action. Gianfrancesco himself observed "Fiorentini non stanno cossi caldi ne mostraveno".<sup>215/</sup> "Sono tute parole!" This remark of Corrado's is the most succinct statement of Gianfrancesco's prospects of aid.<sup>216/</sup> On 14 July he wrote to Corrado in explicit terms summing up his position. He said that he had been quite prepared to place his state at risk for Visconti's friendship and support, but there was a limit to what he could do without adequate backing: "Ma che in tutto lo vogliamo perdere no, perché siamo disposti morire Signore de Mantua, ne intendemo chel manchi per noy. E a voler provvedere a questo solamente cè uno rimedio, che habiamo le nostre zente darne in punto le qual non ge possiamo mettere ne mantenere quelle ge sono senza dinaro".<sup>217/</sup> Moreover, he realised that as matters then

stood, there would be no point in pursuing any moves for peace with the Venetians when they were on the point of finally getting their revenge on Gianfrancesco.

Effectively Gianfrancesco was going to have to face the Sforza threat alone.<sup>218/</sup> It was to be too strong for him. The rebellion of Asola was an ill omen for what was eventually to occur. There had been a number of influential people in the 'squadra' of Asola who had resented Gianfrancesco's change of allegiance in 1438 and the approach of Sforza triggered off a rebellion. Galeazzo Daina, Bartolomeo della Luna, Giacomo Filippo and Gelmino Ravani had formally asked to return under direct Venetian rule. Although Andrea da Pesaro and Giovanni Cavalcabò, the Podestà, held out in the citadel, long term resistance was impossible. By 26 July Asola and its surrounding territory was firmly under Venetian, or rather Sforza's rule.<sup>219/</sup> Neither Carlo nor Ludovico, despite gallant attempts, were able to make any headway here. However, the Venetians were more anxious for Sforza to move northwards towards Valleggio, Lonato and Peschiera "cum sunt claves territori Veronense". In the instructions to Pasquale Malipiero, the provveditore, they gave full vent to their vindictiveness against Gianfrancesco. They were reminding Sforza of their promise to give him Mantua, of how dangerous it would be for security to allow the city to remain in the possession of the Gonzaga.<sup>220/</sup> They were determined that their communications would no longer be threatened.

To a certain extent Sforza did carry out Venetian policy. He did move northwards taking Guiduzzolo, Volta, Canedo, Cavriana, Rivoltella, Rana and Castiglione delle Stiviere. Having reached the lake he then captured Lonato,<sup>221/</sup> and finally, on 14 August, he laid



siege to the most important prize of all, Paschiara. On the previous day the Senate had issued instructions to Malipiero to get Sforza to capture Valleggio and Goito. "quod navigia nostra in ipso lacu Mantue conduci possint".<sup>222/</sup> It wished to take the war into the city itself. After a very brief siege Peschiera fell on 17 August, closely followed by the surrender of Valleggio.<sup>223/</sup> All this was Gianfrancesco's reward for being the servant of the Visconti! Throughout the period he continued to implore aid, but the result speaks for itself.

Sforza's campaign was, on the surface, an unqualified disaster for Gianfrancesco; it was a chilling answer to the doubts which he had felt not much more than two years previously. However, all was not lost. Although the Senate never ceased to urge Sforza to keep attacking Gianfrancesco relentlessly,<sup>224/</sup> he did not threaten Mantua itself, partly, no doubt, because there were large concentrations of men there.<sup>225/</sup> Instead he continued his campaign into the Veronese. Under his command Lazise and Malcesine were captured and the Valcamonica, Val Trompia and Val di Sabbia were finally cleared of Viscontean troops. It is true that Sforza was in an exceedingly strong position, but he was still open to offers by Milan and the only thing that Gianfrancesco could hope for was that Filippo Maria would use his diplomatic weight in order to obtain the restitution of the territories he had lost. The tragedy of Gianfrancesco's situation was that at every turn he was thrown on the good offices of one who had repeatedly played him false.

Even while Sforza was busy in the Mantovano he showed himself willing to continue negotiations with Milan. Even as early as 5 August Corrado was informing Gianfrancesco that Sforza was quite willing to consider

Milanese terms, provided that Cremona and Crema could be used as security for the eventual payment of the 150,000 ducats of Bianca's dowry. Provided some agreement could be reached he was quite prepared to restore all the fortresses that had been taken from Gianfrancesco.<sup>226/</sup> After all, the Gonzaga had hardly been the aggressor in this campaign. Despite Venetian protests to Sforza that any negotiations with Milan would be "piena dolis et fraude",<sup>227/</sup> some progress must have been made because on 28 August Bianca was sent by her father to Ferrara, presumably as a demonstration of goodwill by her father.<sup>228/</sup> According to Poggio Bracciolini this was done at the suggestion of Niccolò d'Este who actually made the journey to Milan to escort her to Ferrara.<sup>229/</sup> If this is true it must have been a great accomplishment because Este was in very poor health during this period. The presence of Bianca in Ferrara, however, was also designed to put her eligibility in the marriage stakes to its maximum use. It was precisely this continued deviousness by Filippo Maria which was the biggest barrier to a quick settlement. The eventual peace was thereby delayed for at least a year because of this attitude. It has been argued, with considerable justification, that the desire to get the better of Sforza tended to become obsessive with Visconti from now on;<sup>230/</sup> it certainly drew from him some of his most tortuous behaviour. Moreover, it did play an important part in the humiliating losses which Mantua was forced to suffer in the Peace of Cavriana.

Campaigns of one sort or another were to continue between Venice and Milan until the August of 1441, but for the most part they did not concern Mantua directly. The fighting was prompted by the

eventual return of Piccinino during the winter of 1440-1441 and was an attempt to regain some of the ground which had been lost to Sforza in 1440, but the campaigning was characterised by increasing war weariness on both sides. It was the spiralling cost of this increasingly sterile warfare which prompted the final moves towards peace.

From the autumn of 1440 the discussions became more serious and the very full and plentiful reports from Gianfrancesco's ambassadors throughout this final period give us a fascinating picture of the remarkably complex nature of the discussions. This documentation shows how important the diplomacy had become for Gianfrancesco now. In the summer of 1440, as we have seen, he had lost a great deal and, despite the complexities and intricacies of the discussions in Milan, Venice and Ferrara, the issue which concerned Gianfrancesco was starkly simple - how possible would it be for Filippo Maria to get back the territories he had lost and live up to his promises of maintaining the integrity of his state? Of course, this was intricately bound up with the fate of Bianca and Sforza, but we shall try to highlight the interests of Mantua in the course of the negotiations of this period.

Gianfrancesco did have a certain amount of support apart from that of the Visconti. Throughout the difficulties of the preceeding summer the Este, both father and son, had shown themselves to be faithful friends interceding not only with Sforza but also with Venice on his behalf. As far as Venice was concerned there seemed to be a slightly less belligerent attitude towards Gianfrancesco in September 1440.

Although they were still urging a vigorous campaign in the Mantovano the Senate was yet able to say in its instructions to its Florentine ambassador Andrea Mocenigo on 7 September: "volumus venire ad pacem cum eodem Marchione Mantua iustam et rationalem". <sup>231/</sup> Similarly, in November, the

Senate through Leonardo Venier in Ferrara, was urging Gianfrancesco to discuss his position in secret if he so wished.<sup>232/</sup> The fact that Sforza was actively in touch with Milan at the time may have prompted the Senate to mollify its attitude to Gianfrancesco,<sup>233/</sup> but it all constituted a slight glimmer in the darkness even though the words 'just' and 'rational' implied all sorts of limitations. In fact, in December the Senate went as far as asking Venier to convince Gianfrancesco, through Leonello if necessary, that Venice still wanted to offer its protection to Mantua and was prepared to forget this lapse.<sup>234/</sup> After all the events of the previous summer this was asking quite a lot of Gianfrancesco's credulity.

The dominant theme in all the correspondence relating to Visconti and Sforza was the question of Bianca. By the end of the year a note of exasperation was beginning to creep into the comments of Calcagnini and other ambassadors. There seems to be little doubt, judging from what ultimately happened, that Sforza wanted the marriage to take place, and it was only the deep suspicion between the two men which dragged the matter out longer than it need have been. It was all part of this obsession of Filippo Maria's referred to earlier and it was most unfortunate that Gianfrancesco's territorial problems were intimately bound up with it. Bianca was Visconti's trump card and he was not prepared to play it until the stakes were right. Similarly, Sforza's mistrust of the Duke made him demand cast iron assurances that he would not go back upon his word. At the same time Filippo Maria was holding on until Piccinino's ultimate arrival in Lombardy could add military weight to his position while the Venetian Senate was using all its influence with Sforza via the Provveditori to convince him of the

Duke's insincerity. It was a situation of stalemate which existed as far as Milanese/Sforza relations were concerned, and a situation which admittedly involved a Milanese loss of all its gains in the war; but, more relevant to our case, it was Gianfrancesco who had lost most, and stood to lose more possibly if the situation was not resolved satisfactorily. The only way in which Gianfrancesco could influence matters was not by force but by words; by diplomatic pressure on all sides. It must have been extremely frustrating for Gianfrancesco to have witnessed Filippo Maria's actions of October 1440 in which he tried to use Bianca's presence at Ferrara to his advantage.<sup>235/</sup>

Throughout the course of this last phase of the war the Este had occupied a very ambiguous position. We have seen that although Niccolò and Leonello had a considerable amount of sympathy with Milan, the proximity of Venice did not allow this to be shown in a practical guise. The matter was further complicated after Gianfrancesco's declaration for Milan by the fact that there were close marital ties between the Gonzaga and Este families. Throughout the war we have observed that the Este, particularly Leonello, had given Gianfrancesco a great deal of moral support and, during the latter part of 1440, Niccolò, whose health was failing and was no doubt beginning to be concerned about the succession, was genuinely anxious to bring the war to an end.

On 7 October 1440 Filippo Maria issued two sets of instructions to Simone Ghillino and Francesco da Landriano. In one he instructed them to give Bianca to Sforza and to infeudate him with Cremona and Pontemoli as dowry in return for an oath of fidelity.<sup>236/</sup> In the second set of instructions these same men were to offer Bianca to Leonello,<sup>237/</sup> and to negotiate a dowry, while Filippo Maria promised to arrange the necessary Papal dispensations "non obstantibus aliquibus hactenus inter

Comitem Francisum et ipsam gestis, cum eodem domino Leonello matrimoniam contrahere".<sup>238/</sup> It seemed that Filippo Maria was blind to his previous mistakes. He had tried this game of forcing Sforza's hand before, in vain. It had the same result on this occasion, but now he was in a much less strong position. In fact, Sforza, who was at Peschiera, refused to go to Ferrara to even discuss the matter and informed the Senate of what had happened. He merely continued his campaign in the Veronese. It was this sort of behaviour which aggravated Gianfrancesco's position and further convinced him that the Duke was too preoccupied with his rivalry with Sforza to help him. In the Spring of 1441 Bianca was returned to Milan and all the work of the Mantuan ambassadors in Ferrara and Milan counted for nothing.

From November 1440 to March 1441 Zenebaldo, Calcagnini and Corrado were hard at work on Gianfrancesco's behalf. Numerous reports survive for this period and although their contents are somewhat repetitive, they do reveal that there was a general desire for peace, and, moreover, that there was sympathy for Gianfrancesco's predicament. On 23 November Calcagnini was reporting that there was a growing war weariness in Florence and Venice.<sup>239/</sup> Uguccione de'Contrari had promised to do everything in his power to help Gianfrancesco. In fact, Calcagnini had had a long discussion with him on the previous day and he had emphasised the importance of obtaining from the Venetians a guarantee "che non se sperasse may de havere la S. vostra, se interamente non retituisse el vostro".<sup>240/</sup> The Florentine ambassador Bernardo de'Medici was in agreement with this; it was now a question of getting the Venetians to favour such a peace. In the circumstances it was not going to be easy to achieve as Calcagnini indicated.<sup>241/</sup> One of the ways of trying to do this was for all other

parties to agree to it, and to this effect, Zenebaldo, Ghillino, Landriano and Bernardo de' Medici had a meeting with Este on 27 November to discuss this. A plan of action had been suggested by Bernardo and it was summed up by Calcagnini as follows:

".... che remettendose el S. messer lo  
Duca liberamente nel Conte cerca questa  
pase cum salvatione de lhonore de esso  
conte, e segurezza de Fiorentini, chel  
prefato havuto risposta di ciò, andarà  
immediate a Venesia e a tuta brigha  
adopera si che la pace, o vogliano o no i  
Venetiani, haverà loco e luy andarà nel reame  
a far li facti soi, cum promissione de cadauna  
de le parte." 242/

There were a number of difficulties over this plan, not the least of which was that Filippo Maria's ambiguous attitude to Bianca's marriage had for the time being driven Sforza back towards Venice. Calcagnini was not at all sure how the details of this plan would work out, but seemed to be confident that the restoration of Mantuan territories would be one of the conditions. 243/

Discussions along these lines were to continue throughout the winter and Zenebaldo sent Gianfrancesco regular reports of what progress was being made. Both Este and Florence wanted peace badly and Zenebaldo, in his letters, never ceased to tell Gianfrancesco of their good intentions; but even before the end of 1440 it had become clear that there were some formidable obstacles to overcome. First of all, the Venetians did not show themselves disposed to restore all the lands that had been taken in the Mantovano. This had become obvious even before the end of November. 244/ However much they wanted to become

more friendly towards Gianfrancesco they were clearly not going to jeopardise their communications with Brescia any more. Moreover, even though the Florentines were assuring Gianfrancesco of their support, when it came to broaching the subject with the Venetians themselves they seemed unduly reticent.<sup>245/</sup> Moreover, the Florentines were still very doubtful about Filippo Maria's sincerity. On 2 December Bernardo asked Zenebaldo about how genuine he was:

"..sel S. messer lo duca realmente venerà a queste pratiche del quale pur dubitano i Fiorentini: dicendome luy apertamente, se nuy fussemo certi chel duca venisse ala pace sinceramente, e cercheressem cum altra instantia chel S. messer lo marchese di Mantua fusse interamente restituito, se bene devessemo venere ad altro cha a parole cum Venetiani. Ma dubitemo tropo che non vadi fugendo e squizando a suo modo usato." <sup>246/</sup>

Even though Zenebaldo tried his best to reassure Bernardo over this, these doubts ran deep. Bernardo was very conscious of how important a genuine move for peace was, especially as a continuation of the war would cost Florence dearly, as the Venetian ambassadors had never ceased to remind him. Similarly, Sforza's own attitude to these negotiations was ambivalent, even though Zenebaldo did feel that he was fairly confident that he would favour Milan in the long run.<sup>247/</sup> The Milanese were reminding Sforza of what had happened to Carmagnola. Zenebaldo realised that the negotiations had reached a crucial stage and that it would soon become clear whether it would be peace or war.<sup>248/</sup>

In the following month the negotiations collapsed and the prospect of a renewal of the war drew nearer although when the fighting started it was not to be continuous (because the Venetian forces were not adequately



prepared). At the beginning of January 1441 Zenebaldo was writing that the Florentines were not as solicitous about Mantuan interests as they had professed themselves to be in the previous month:

"Pare etiam che dicto Bernardo se doglia molto de Simonio che habia dicta a Vinexia che Bernadeto ha promessi e dicto qui chel Conte e Fiorentini farano che Veneciani restitu-irano le tere vostre. Dicie Bernardeto ogni persona sa bene che lui e Fiorentini non possono a questo facto metre alltro che parolle cum monstrare a Veneciani che vogliano la pacie e simelmente el conte non glie puo alltro che confortare i Veneciani ala pacie cum restitutione de le tere vostre e quaxi<sup>249/</sup> mete la cosa in gran dubio che la non habia loco."

The situation looked very gloomy for Mantua and Zenebaldo judged that it was partly the result of Filippo Maria's unwillingness to give adequate assurances to the Florentines, particularly over the restitution of Bologna, captured by Piccinino.<sup>250/</sup> In fact the wranglings and delays of those who purported to be Mantua's friends caused the faithful Zenebaldo to comment acidly that what he had feared for some time was in fact true: "che de facti nostri ne sia facta una merchantia".<sup>251/</sup> It was one of the most pertinent comments made on Mantua's situation during this period. There was all the difference in the world between promises and action; this was becoming a familiar refrain to Gianfrancesco by now.

By now the Venetians had set the final seal upon the diplomatic impasse by putting forward conditions for peace to which Filippo Maria would never be able to agree without swallowing his pride. He had to restore all lands he had taken in the Bresciano, Bergamasco and the Veronese, especially Legnago and Ostiglia. Sforza was to have Cremona and the Cremonese; Bologna and other lands in the Romagna were to be returned to the Pope and all territory captured from the Florentines and Genoese was to be restored to them.<sup>252/</sup>

Any real basis for a settlement was lacking and the discussions which took place in Venice during the month of January broke up with a great deal of mutual recrimination. These bickerings are not relevant to our present discussion.<sup>253/</sup> As far as Mantua's interests were concerned, the despatches of Zenebaldo reveal the true story. Despite the promises of Bernardo and the Este, the Venetians were plainly not going to allow Gianfrancesco to keep those territories which their communications between Brescia and Verona depended upon, especially Peschiera.<sup>254/</sup> It was with justification that Corrado wrote from Milan on 9 February that by now peace was out of the question.<sup>255/</sup> Anyhow, by now Piccinino had reappeared on the scene and Filippo Maria felt that here was another opportunity for him to impose his will upon Lombardy. In reality, however, it was to be a war waged upon the feeblest financial resources. Even before Piccinino took the field Corrado was writing:

"Me è dicto da più persone che le facende del ritrovar dinari non porono seguire per la via che era dato ad intendere al Capitano, perché li populi sono molti sublevati a non voler pagar uno soldo. Et alcuni mi dicono sel fosse principato a questa terra el facto del imbottato, como foe ad de le altre, seria seguito uno grande scandalo."<sup>256/</sup>

Venice found itself in a similar position. It is not surprising that the fighting between February and August achieved nothing. In the midst of all this was Gianfrancesco, and the bitter experience of these months proved to be a mere rehearsal of what was to follow at Cavriana. His interests at first had been courted by his allies, only to be subsequently cast aside when they proved to be incompatible with their own interests. The reappearance of Piccinino could give him no greater cause for confidence.

On 8 February Calcagnini reported to Gianfrancesco a conversation he had had with the Ducal ambassador, who had reassured him of the continuing efforts to reach a peace which would guarantee the safety of Mantua and that the other parties were still well disposed to him.<sup>257/</sup> Similarly, on the following day Corrado was writing in the same vein; that Filippo Maria was assuring him that he was more anxious for friends than territories and that Gianfrancesco could count on his support.<sup>258/</sup> However, by now Gianfrancesco had heard this sort of thing before and now he wanted deeds rather than promises. During the final months of the war he was still going to try to liberate his territories from Venetian occupation, but his main fear now was that Filippo Maria would make an agreement with Venice to his detriment. The way in which the discussions at Ferrara and Venice developed during the winter months was to haunt him for the rest of 1441. He feared that history might repeat itself: he turned out to be only too right.

Despite the fact that fighting should have ceased during the winter months, there was a great deal of preparation in the Milanese camp after Piccinino's arrival.<sup>259/</sup> Apparently some 300,000 ducats was spent on these preparations, raised from the whole of the Milanese and, when the army crossed the Oglio on 13 February it consisted of 8,000 cavalry and 3,000 infantry.<sup>260/</sup> The fighting extended through the Cremonese into the Ghiaradadda. Corrado was sending detailed reports about the movements of the army primarily because Carlo was fighting alongside Piccinino. According to Corrado Carlo had asked to be among the first troops to cross the Oglio. Apparently the Mantuan contingent fought well although Carlo was somewhat impatient that Piccinino was prepared to parley with the men of Chiari:

".... dice che Misser Carlo andoe da lo Capitaneo, et dissi questa era una gran vergogna a tanta zente a dover stare ad attendere a parole, et che se gie dovea dar la bataglia. Pregando la sua Mag.tia gie desse licentia chel fosse el primo, cum la sua compagnia, et cossi gie foe concessa, et tutto li altri seguitarono." 261/

Chiari was soon captured and by the end of February Visconti's strategy of quick movement had paid some dividend. Gottolengo, Gambara, Pontevico and Soncino were all occupied. 262/

While all this was gratifying to Gianfrancesco he wanted Piccinino to follow up this success by a campaign in the Mantovano to recover those areas still in Sforza's hands, and Corrado was asked to press for this in Milan. On 24 February he was able to report to Gianfrancesco that Filippo Maria had promised some degree of intervention after the Cremonese had been completely recovered. 263/ One of the reasons for this was that he himself together with Ludovico had tried to remedy the situation by successfully obtaining the bridge at Valleggio on 22 of the month and he wanted some backing from Piccinino. This is evident from Corrado's report of 26 February in which he stated that definite instructions had been issued to Piccinino by the Duke to the following effect:

"... che, postponuta ogni altra cosa, se drizi a venire ala recuperatione de le tere vostre, et del resto del piano de Bressana."

Corrado had also written to Carlo so that he might encourage Piccinino to come as quickly as possible.<sup>264/</sup> Apparently, Filippo Maria had been very impressed with what Gianfrancesco himself was doing. He was more pleased to hear that he had recovered one of his territories than hearing that ten of his own had been recovered.<sup>265/</sup> Moreover, encouraging news had reached Milan that there were severe shortages in Verona and that there were still men in Peschiera and Lonato loyal to Mantua who were only too willing to rise up against their new masters should a suitable opportunity present itself.<sup>266/</sup> In the same letter of 3 March he mentioned the anger of Este against the Venetians and the rumblings of discontent at the continuing of the war in Padua, Vicenza and Verona.

For the time being the fortunes of war seemed to favour Milan. A combination of swift action from Piccinino, war weariness in Venice and a temporary hiatus in the command of the Venetian army had meant that that Piccinino was not strongly opposed. Gattamelata had effectively retired but it was not until the end of May that his successor Michelotto Attendolo was able to give any reinforcement to Sforza. This situation meant that as far as the Visconti was concerned, he was once again in a position to dictate terms regarding Bianca. It was about this time that she was returned to Milan,<sup>267/</sup> and, despite hopes of a settlement, Filippo Maria returned to his old game. The situation was not eased by the presence of Piccinino and the revival of their animosity. The revival of the issues which had effectively killed off the winter negotiations now only served to anger Gianfrancesco, as Este had been angered. This personal obsession of the Duke with Sforza was not only humiliating for Gianfrancesco, but it further sapped his morale.<sup>268/</sup>

Furthermore, the desire to pursue Sforza to Verona at the beginning of March seemed to supersede the plans for the recuperation of Gianfrancesco's territories.<sup>269/</sup> Moreover, at that time Filippo Maria owed Gianfrancesco a considerable amount of money in back pay, some 20,000 ducats. In fact, this prompted far more open complaints from Gianfrancesco to the Duke than ever before, complaints that the Visconti was not really interested in Mantua at all.<sup>270/</sup> These were very reminiscent of the situation which had existed between Gianfrancesco and Venice in 1438. Although this produced elaborate denials of this charge from Filippo Maria on the very same day,<sup>271/</sup> the relations between the two men remained tense, and were to be so from now on.

These remaining months were ones of anguish for Gianfrancesco because it became increasingly clearer to him that he might well be the real loser in the war. On the one side Filippo Maria's promises were worthless, on the other side the Venetians were urging Sforza by promising him prizes which included Mantua as well as Cremona and even Milan itself! The tension between the Duke and Gianfrancesco was also apparent to the Venetians.<sup>272/</sup> As early as April he was seriously considering cutting his losses in favour of peace. One of the most revealing letters about his attitude during this period is to be seen in Corrado's letter to Paola on 17 April. He commented cynically "ma le cose di qua sono molto disforme." Furthermore the dangers of waging such a war without adequate financial resources were patently manifest. Gianfrancesco had always left the major decision of war or peace in Filippo Maria's hands. One of the major obstacles to peace had been the question of the Mantuan territories, but now he considered that the time had come for the conclusion of peace even though there was the humiliating

prospect of sacrifices to be made. He stated:

"Essa serà più contento che non gie  
sia restituite le decte terre, et  
che per questo non se serà de far la  
pace che a dover stare a tanto dubio de  
pericolar et de perdere quelle che gie  
sono rimaste parendo pur ala E. a sua de  
voler proseguire la guerra, post ponendo  
questa sua impossibilità et star al  
periculo de la fortuna."

273/

It was a terrible sacrifice to have to admit, but the risks were high in the game which Gianfrancesco had been involved. He naturally hoped that he might be able to salvage some of his losses, but from the beginning of his association with the Visconti it seemed to Gianfrancesco that all he had done was to make sacrifices.

However, for the time being Filippo Maria had no intention of giving up his struggle with Sforza. On 27 April he entrusted Pietro Cotto with the task of negotiating an alliance with Este which included Bianca's marriage with "illi ex filiis dicti illustri domini Marchioni Estensi de quo dicta Petro procuratori de mente ipsius domini domini Ducis, plene informato melius videbitur et placuerit". <sup>274/</sup> It was a tactic which had failed twice, and it failed again. The matter was now out of Gianfrancesco's hands. He could do no more and now with Sforza reforming and with Piccinino not having moved nearer the Mantovano than Gambara, the strain was beginning to tell on him. Gianfrancesco's health was now beginning to deteriorate and, at the end of May, he was now considering attending the baths at Borni. <sup>275/</sup>

The situation at the beginning of June looked threatening once again. By now the Venetians were prepared to take the field and as the

forces of the league marched out to meet Piccinino, Gianfrancesco's experiences of Sforza's movements led him to fear very much that he might lose more territory. After all, the army of the league was in Verona and Piccinino was in Gambara; they were separated only by the Mantovano. There was now no one in whom Gianfrancesco could trust to give him any help. There is some evidence that the Venetians were continuing to make approaches to him even as late as the beginning of June. Throughout this period they had been secretly trying to achieve the 'just' and 'reasonable' peace referred to above; but by now Gianfrancesco's morale was so low that he did not believe that they were sincere. On 7 June the Senate wrote to the Rectors of Verona and the Provveditori to Sforza about the way in which discussions had broken down. A certain Alberto Orlando had just returned from Mantua and the letters he had brought with him categorically stated that Gianfrancesco believed "*quod non attendanus ea quod promettemus sibi*". The Senate indignantly protested that it had always kept its word and Gianfrancesco especially "*qui longissime tempore practicavit res nostros*" should have known them better.<sup>276/</sup> Although they did not close the door to any further discussions, there are no further references to any more direct discussions taking place.

On the eve of the departure of the Venetian army Gianfrancesco was to have one last attempt with the Visconti. On 8 June the Duke wrote to him in an attempt to improve their relationship and his lengthy letter is very revealing in so far as it documents clearly the differences between them and also Gianfrancesco's fears. By that time his ambassador Pietro Cotta had returned from Ferrara after the failure of the mission to marry Bianca to Leonello and he had reported Zenebaldo's attempts to patch up the differences which Filippo Maria had largely created.<sup>277/</sup>



However, the main portion of the letter deals with an assurance in writing which Gianfrancesco wanted from him. He had been very much disturbed by reports he had received about certain remarks of a hostile nature towards Gianfrancesco which the Duke was reputed to have made.<sup>278/</sup> Filippo Maria, for his part, strenuously denied these reports as lies protesting his affection for Gianfrancesco and Mantua and his gratitude for all he had done in his service. Not only did he promise to pay him 11,000 ducats but also all his back pay by the end of the month. This was rather a contrast to what Corrado was writing on 25 May. He was saying of the money: "Credo chel diavolo tenga accechati e incatenati questor".<sup>279/</sup> Finally, Filippo Maria promised to instruct Piccinino to do his best to recapture Asola and Castelgoffredo. However, should it not be possible to do so he would undertake to provide him with sufficient men and money in addition to Gianfrancesco's condotta of 500 lances and 500 infantry for the defence of his state.<sup>280/</sup> As far as this last matter was concerned, the Duke furnished a formal document confirming his intention to defend Gianfrancesco's territories.<sup>281/</sup>

Judging from Gianfrancesco's letter to Corrado on the following day, he was content with the promises and assurances which Filippo Maria had given.<sup>282/</sup> However, in the formal declaration no territories were specified; not even Asola and Castelgoffredo. Neither was there even a general promise to recover any other lands which had been lost. While he did undertake to send his own men into the Mantovano if it should be necessary, in the first instance the defence was to be undertaken by Gianfrancesco's own men. It seems very much that once again the Duke's commitment was very minimal indeed.

On 12 June the Venetian army left Verona and reached Bagnolo on the 23rd; on the 21st Piccinino moved to Manerbio from Gambara. Four days later the two armies met at Agnano and the Venetian army sustained heavy losses.<sup>283/</sup> The campaign took place almost entirely in the area between Brescia and Cremona and did not affect the Mantovano directly at all. The battle of Agnano was followed by what appeared more and more to be a personal competition between Piccinino and Sforza. The whole affair was pointless, inconclusive and, above all, very expensive. The final act of this campaign occurred at the beginning of July with Sforza's siege of Martinengo in the Bergamasco where he had heard that there were 1,000 enemy cavalry. He was aiming to clear the way between Bergamo and Brescia.<sup>284/</sup> He was pursued by Piccinino and everything looked set for a fierce contest. However, surprisingly nothing happened. Da Soldo notes: "...stagando li campi in questo modo de l'una parte e de l'altra e non dogandose altro, cioè de pace, senon di guerra".<sup>285/</sup> This situation lasted for eighteen days. The forces were so evenly matched that neither side wanted to run the risk of losing. It was obvious that this situation could not be allowed to continue much longer. In fact, Sforza had planned to evacuate his troops from the area by the end of July or the beginning of August at the very latest; but before this could be accomplished, on 1 August a truce of eight days was suddenly proclaimed by Sforza himself.<sup>286/</sup>

The background to these sudden developments is told by Simonetta and illustrates very well indeed how Filippo Maria had got himself into a very tight corner. On the night before the truce was declared Sforza was visited secretly by Antonio Guidobono, the Duke's envoy. Antonio repeated the offer of Bianca's hand in marriage together with Cremona and Pontremoli.<sup>287/</sup> One of the reasons why the two armies

had not joined battle at Martinengo was that Piccinino had hoped to blackmail Filippo Maria by demanding the city of Piacenza as a reward. This was followed by territorial demands by other condottieri in the army partly as a recompense for payment which had never been made. Filippo Maria was unable to pay his army any more money and the alarming consequences of being forced to concede to his captains led him to consider that to buy off Sforza was cheaper.<sup>288/</sup> Likewise, Sforza found himself in financial difficulties and this was a good escape from the possibilities of suffering a defeat at the hands of Piccinino. On this occasion he accepted and his offer to mediate a peace with Milan was also a welcome relief for Venice. Both sides had heartily become tired of such a sterile war and were glad of any pretext to bring it to an end. When Urbino di Giacomo brought the news to Piccinino together with instructions for the truce he was angered at being presented with such a 'fait accompli', but he had been outmanoeuvred by Filippo Maria and had to give in.<sup>289/</sup> On 3 August the two commanders met and arrangements were made for the dispersal of troops pending the re-opening of peace negotiations.<sup>290/</sup>

What repercussions was all this to have on Gianfrancesco? It now looked as though the chances of peace were very good, but how did this affect Filippo Maria's promises to Gianfrancesco? As far as the money was concerned, there is no evidence whatsoever that it was paid. The more serious question was over his territories. What would become of them now that negotiations with Venice were about to open? Would the Duke try to defend Mantuan interests?

Despite his undertaking to protect the Mantovano, the Duke knew perfectly well that no settlement could be reached on the basis of a complete restitution of Gianfrancesco's lands as early as the beginning of July. On 12 of that month a letter was written to Michele Gritti by another member of his family stating perfectly clearly the intention of the Senate. It reads:

"...zoé che quel Marchexe sia in tutto reintegrato nel stato suo, avizandove che la prefata Signoria ha fato respondere al predicto Signore Marchexe, e cussi è contenta sia dechiarido al Signore Duca che non solamente le non vuol questo far ma la intende haver tutto quello che e dà i territory de le cità de Brexa e de Verona."

It concluded by stating that a peace would soon be forthcoming if the Duke were to agree to these terms.<sup>291/</sup> This was repeated formally by the Senate on 21 July.<sup>292/</sup> Of course there was no intention of keeping all the areas occupied by Sforza, it was only those lands which affected their communications that they were determined to keep.<sup>293/</sup> This situation had not changed by the end of August when this was formally relayed by the Senate to Sforza who, it had been agreed, was to arbitrate the peace settlement. It stated that in return for the territories it wished to keep: Asola, Viadana, Peschiera, Lonato and Legnago, it was content to restore all the other areas which had been occupied. The Venetians emphasised that they had to insist upon this for security.<sup>294/</sup> Because of the way in which Filippo Maria had been forced to come to terms with Sforza to protect him from the demands of his own captains, and his real financial need for peace with the Venetians, it is arguable that even before the discussions opened at Cavriana, ironically in the Mantovano, Gianfrancesco's fate had been settled and there was no way in which

Filippo Maria could alter it. His need to protect his own interests virtually dictated that Mantua had to be ditched.

The discussions at Cavriana began in September and were attended by ambassadors from the Pope, Florence, Milan, Ferrara and Mantua. Francesco Barbaro and Paolo Tron represented Venice and their instructions as far as Mantua was concerned merely reiterated what had been decided beforehand.<sup>295/</sup> Consequently, any discussions over Mantuan interests were ultimately merely a formality. This did not mean that Gianfrancesco did not put up a fight for them; this is clearly indicated in a letter written by the Podestà of Mantua, Sceve de Curti, to Paola on 11 October. Apparently the Duke did put up some semblance of support for Gianfrancesco, but in the end it was evident that no one at Cavriana was prepared to sacrifice an eventual agreement by opposing Venice's demands.<sup>296/</sup>

These discussions were punctuated by the marriage of Sforza to Bianca on 25 October at Cremona.<sup>297/</sup> It was his wish to conclude this matter as quickly as possible. Whether Filippo Maria liked it or not, Francesco Sforza, the man he had so often attempted to beguile, was now a member of the Visconti family. There was no doubt who had won *that* particular struggle. Sforza, married to Filippo Maria's heiress, strong enough to defend her interests, certainly had a glittering future ahead of him.

In Sforza's arbitration, which was published on 20 November, only one state registered any considerable losses - Mantua. None of the others had to make any sacrifices. The clock was essentially put back to 1433, the year of the second treaty of Ferrara. All lands taken after

that date were to be restored by the respective parties.<sup>298/</sup> Once again the Adda boundary was established for the Milanese state; the Pope got Bologna and Imola; Florence and Genoa acquired the territories they had lost. But Gianfrancesco paid the supreme penalty of losing Lonato, Peschiera and Asola.<sup>299/</sup> It is true that the other territories were restored to him and that he had known for some time that the chances of losing them were great; but it was still a bitter pill to swallow. They were territories for which he had had a special affection, and, by now an ailing man, he found it very difficult to reconcile himself to their loss. In fact, he was still questioning the decision in April 1442, long after the peace was finally promulgated on 10 December 1441.<sup>300/</sup> Gianfrancesco must have wondered what had happened to all the promises his friends had made in the preceeding year. The Treaty of Cavriana might have brought peace to Lombardy, but for Gianfrancesco it was nothing but a triumph of self-interest which, moreover, bit all the more deeply by the last article which concerned him:

"Item-arbitramus qm. prefatus I.D.  
Marchio Mantue remaneat et remanere  
debeat colligatus aut reccomendatus I.D. 301/  
Ducis Mediolani".

Even at the end he was tied to a man whose friendship had brought only bitterness and loss. The question which he had asked himself in August 1438 had finally be answered.

"Tutti quanti li scholari com rami de  
oliva, com tutto lo popolo, cadauno  
cridanolo "Pace! Pace!" che'l sonava  
che tutto lo mondo tonasse. Era in  
quella mattina sulla piazza più de 12  
millia persone che tutti quanti cridavano 302/  
" Pace! Pace!"

This is how Da Soldo described the festivities which took place in Brescia when the peace was proclaimed. There are no such descriptions to be found among the Mantuan chroniclers.

The disappointment over Cavriana overshadowed the final years of Gianfrancesco's life. It is, of course, arguable that matters could have been much worse for him and that he should have been grateful for having a state at all after what he had done in 1438.

However, although the Peace of Cavriana cannot testify to Gianfrancesco's success, neither can it stand as a failure. In 1438 he was faced with an incredibly difficult situation and he had decided to risk everything in joining Milan because he felt that this was the best way of serving Mantua. There had been no alternative but this and unfortunately he little realised what sort of a man Filippo Maria Visconti was. In serving the Visconti he had had nothing but a succession of broken promises as a result of which his state had faced the greatest threat of his whole career. The war patently illustrated the weaknesses inherent in Mantua's position as much as the earlier struggle had illustrated its strengths. In the end, the very fact that Mantua existed at all is due as much to the desirability to Milan and Venice of having a buffer state between them as anything else and because of this the Marquis of Mantua could never be granted the luxury of resting easy. He always had to weigh the strengths of his protector against those of his adversary. Even though Gianfrancesco may well have thought that he had made the wrong decision in 1438, one cannot doubt his courage or his motives in having made it.

Indeed Lombardy was at peace once more - but for how long? How long would it be before the familiar pattern would repeat itself? It was not to be a question which would concern Gianfrancesco because, when war once more rolled across the Lombard plain, there was to be another Marquis in Mantua.



## CHAPTER 5

THE SERVANT OF THE VISCONTI (1438-1442)Notes

1. Da Soldo, p.10.
2. F.Tarducci, "L'Alleanza....," cit.
3. Erolì, op.cit., pp.111-112; Da Soldo, p.11.
4. G.Soranzo, "L'ultima campagna del Gattamelata al Servizio della Repubblica Veneta", Archivio Veneto, vols. LX-LXI (1957), p.81.
5. See Erolì, appendix, pp.385-390. This was a fairly typical example of Venetian thinking. See also Soranzo, p.81 note 2.
6. Tarducci, "L'Alleanza", op.cit., p.280.
7. Da Soldo, p.12. "E quando lui fu a Valezo per passare, lo castellano lo retenne tanto indusiato ch'el fece saper el Marchese; e lì fu presto e prese quelli 3,000 cavalli. E' lo ditto Zoan Malavolta tornò a Bressa soletto in bello zupone. E in quello dì proprio lo castellano dete Valezo al ditto Marchese; che fu a dì 20 de luio. Possa andò a campo in Gardesana et l'havete subito salva che Lazese. Li stete ben 6 dì a campo et l'have...." Soranzo (p.82) states that Valleggio surrendered on 21 July.
8. On the strength of Lazise see Platina, pp.342-3. Sanuto, col.1062: "A dì 26 s'ebbero lettere di Verona come Lacise era perdùto et etiam Valcamonica."
9. See Soranzo, pp.82-3, for details of this campaign. On 2 August 1438 the list of territories acquired from Venice included Montechiari, Salò, Rivoltella and all the lands around Lake Garda, the 'rocca' of Bonardo, Val Sabbia, Val Trompia, Palazzolo sull'Oglio, Pontoglio, Cividale, Martinengo, Cavriolo, Paratico, Iseo, all the Valcamonica, Valle di Gonduco, Valle di San Martino, Brembilla, all the lands on the Cremonese previously in Venetian hands, Rocca Franca, Orago, Orzivecchi and Orzinuovi. Gianfrancesco and dal Verme had conquered all the lands in the Veronese 'di qua dall'Adige' and the Valle di Agio. A.S.M. Regesti Viscontei, op.cit., vol.2, pt.1, Gli Atti Cancellereschi Viscontei, no.1714.
10. S.S. reg.14, fol.131t, 14 July 1438. See also Sanuto, col.1061: "...In questo giorno fu principiato a lavorare l'armata del Po nell'arsenale... ogni giorno nell'Arsenale lavoravano 900 uomini e più. "E fu fornita tutta la detta armata di tutto quello ch'essa avea di bisogno, e di tutte le cose in pochi giorni, che fu grande meraviglia." This is in marked contrast to the difficulties which Gianfrancesco was to experience in trying to persuade Filippo Maria to get his fleet together.

11. e.g. S.S. reg. 14, fol.137, 29 July 1438, in instructions to Ugucione de'Contrari, Este's ambassador to Venice: "qd. videntes defectionem et tam gravem iniuriam nobis illata per Marchionem Mantue, quam considerantis omnibus considerandis nullo nro. expectabamus neque credere poteramus, deliberavimus facere hanc potentem armatam, pro ulciscendo iniuriam ipsius Marchionis Mantue principaliter, et ad offensiones suas et status sui ac Ducis Mediolani".
12. Arch. Gon. B. 43, fol.258:".... in palatio infrascripti Marchionis Estensis... Domini Leonello... magnifico viro Ugutione de Contrariis..."
13. See Tarducci, op.cit., p.281.
14. Ibid., p.284.
15. Ibid., pp.285-6. Arch. Gon. B. 2099 (F.11.6).
16. Ibid: "circa zò alega la debolezza del stato suo maxime de Ferrara, et che é troppo apresso in le lor forze..."
17. Ibid: "Siando nui possenti como ben seremo de zente ad obstarla, et havendo fatte le altre provisione le qual trovaramo a hostia et a Revero."
18. A similar letter was sent to Paola only two days later on 24 July.
19. Arch. Gon. B.1181, 26 July 1438 in which he had given instructions "quamquam Ugucio non sit ex nostra impositione talia verba enuntiaturus coram ducali dominii de ill. fratre nro. Do. Marchione Mantue, quem ill. Dom. obesse possuit... contentamur quod dictus Ugucio nullum ne minimum quidem verbum faciat in illo Senatu veneto dicto ill.fratre nr..."
20. Sanuto, col.1062.
21. Ibid: "Fu preso di fare un dono al predetto Marchese di Ferrara del Polesine il quale fu suo, e la Signoria l'Avea avuto in pegno per ducati 60,000. Sicché se gli dona liberamente."
22. Sanuto, col.1062. "A dì primo di Agosto s'ebbe.... che il Marchese di Mantova s'era etiam lui ritirato dal Veronese, e dee andare a Milano; e questo perché egli ha buttato fuora ducati 22,000 per fare armata in Po, e nulla e stato fatto...."
23. Arch. Gon. B.2094, fol.188, 31 July: "Sta ottimamente ben veduti e acceptadi... tute le altre cosse opportune seguirano in boni termini...."
24. Ibid: "... ma dal canto nostro e da far provision quanto se conviene, che alcuno mancamento non se li ritrovi... devati pigliare ogni efficace cura .... immo costringendone quella grandemente per la salvatione del stato nostro e vostro...."

25. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 4 Aug. 1438 (To Conte Guido, Alvise & Lancelotto):  
 ".... el qual me dicie lei haver havuto da Messer lo Vescovo de Mantua ch  a Ferrara, e di continuo sta attento a presentire quello siegue del facto de larmada de Veneziani, z  esser arrivato in Po quattro galeote; et che se tene per certo, essa armata dover essere in puncto a di octo de questo mese, o in tuto ul. saltem in tanta quantitate che ser  sufficiente a venir ali danni mei..."
26. Ibid: "Acio che io levando de le mie zente, maxime le fanterie e cernede come ser  necessario per armare li mei XXI galeoni."
27. There was also a plan to detach Guidantonio Manfredi from Venetian service because he was the only Venetian captain in a position to attack Ferrara; see Tarducci, p.289. There is no mention of this in the document cited by him, but it occurs in Arch. Gon. B.2185 for 6 August 1438 in a letter to the same people: "Venendo Messer Leonello ad Hostiglia, vorrei da la signoria soa havere, per instructione, o como li piacesse quanto io devessi tractare cum lui per che in quello mi comandar , non preterir  li commandamenti soi e etiam de facti del magnifico S. di Faenza del quale io facio grandissimo caso, considerato che non so vedere li Venetiani possono havere altro pi  presto soccorso di gente e che presto sia a le offese del Marchese." The rest of the document virtually repeats the same requests as that of 4 August.
28. He states as much in a letter of 14 August.1438. (Osio, vol.iii, part 1, p.162, no. CLXXV): "pergratam habuimus operam quam dedistis apud illustrem Dominum Leonellum.... ut illustris genitori suis cum Venetia partitum non capiat..... quia conjunctissimus vobis est...."
29. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 11 Aug. (Gianfrancesco to Filippo Maria): "Et eandem reperi ipm. d. Leonellum per optime esse dispositum...."
30. Tarducci, op.cit., p.290: ".... e Leonello che per propria dispositione d'animo aveva sentimenti avversi a Venezia, non solo promise l'opera sua presso il padre di restare neutrale e non favorire in alcun modo i Veneziani; e che intanto si fortificava con ogni premura per tenersi pronto contro la probabilit  di un loro assalto."
31. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 11 Aug. (Gianfrancesco to Filippo Maria). There is a great deal of correspondence in the Gonzaga archives relating to this, both in the Chancery Minutes (B.2185) and in the ambassador's reports from Milan (B.1620).
32. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 11 Aug.1438. (Gianfrancesco to Zenebaldo). Although he acknowledged that the fleet was the most important means of protecting Mantua, he also felt that these reinforcements were essential in order to strengthen the land forces.
33. A.S.M. Archivio Ducale, Reg.Duc. no.41, Rr als O (1434-1441) fol.397t..
34. Arch. Gon. B.43, fol.266; a copy of a letter to Alvyse and Guido dal Verme dated 2 August 1438: "Bene,   vero che li   uno capitolo, lo quale voriamo che stasesse in altra forma, de lo quale non volemo fare altra mentione tanto chel prefato S.Messer lo Marchese sia i nostra terra. Anci volemo expectare chel sia tornato a cassa sua. Et alhora la faremo avisare de lo dicto capitolo acio che sel gli piacer  chel se puossa acontiare come nuy voriamo chal stasesse e in quanto el non volesse, chel staghi como el sta."

35. A.S.M. Archivio Ducale, Reg. Duc. no.41, Rr als O., fols.297-400; also Arch. Gon. B.43, fols 271-2.
36. Tarducci suggested on pp.327ff.: "il Conte Alvyse, in previsione dello sfarcelo che si farebbe alla morte di Filippo Maria, veniva preparando le cose sue per tenersi pronto a trarre dagli eventi quel maggior profitto che forse possibile ..... Ora in una probabile divisione della eredità del Visconti, qual parte a lui sarebbe venuta più a proposito di Vicenza e di Verona, nelle cui terre aveva già un qualche feudo." (p.327).
37. Arch. Gon. B.1620, 29 July 1438 (Zenobaldo to Gianfrancesco): "Io stia de bona volia che sopra zò me manderà molto contento."
38. e.g. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 6 Aug.1438: "Se degni far scrivere al Mag. Conte Aloise per li terri di Veronese aquistate che tute liberamente e cossi le rocche me siano poste ne le mane e similmente quelle se aquistarono..."
39. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 13 Aug.1438. (Gianfrancesco to Filippo Maria).
40. Arch. Gon. B.1607, fol.25, 16 Aug.1438 (Filippo Maria to Gianfrancesco): "... Recordandove imperò che nuy non acceptamo puncto questa liberatione che ne haviti facta... anci ne vogliamo essere molto, e molto più obligati che denance... e per questo a Zanibaldo habiamo restituita la ditta vostra littera." This reaction is also noted in Zenobaldo's report to Filippo Maria dated 17 Aug.1438 (Arch. Gon. B.1620, fol.50). Although he confirmed that the Duke's mood was conciliatory, he himself was angered at the response which the letter received: "... io potria sbater del pé adusso..."
41. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 18 Aug.1438 (Instructions from Gianfrancesco to Zenobaldo): "... volendo noi contentarsi di permutare e tor Bressa o Cremona la soa Signoria ne rimarà contentissima, offerendo di volere fare tal cautione e certezza di attendere questo che ne siamo chiari e segurissimi e che a questo partito la soa signoria seria inanimata di metterge Milano e ciò che potesse fare per isfogarsi a la total ruina di costoro. Quando noi non volessemo inclinarge che farse el si ritraria e descenderia a la pace per havere Bressa e Bergamo..."
42. In fact, as early as 19 August Gianfrancesco had been busily trying to make his rule acceptable in the area to the east of the Mincio. On that day a 'grido' was issued which guaranteed the security of all property not only for the area along the Veronese shores of Lake Garda, but also for the districts of Valleggio, Villafranca, Nogarolo and Vigasio. (Arch. Gon. B. 2038, fasc.4).
43. Tarducci, op.cit., p.297.
44. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 21 Aug.1438. (Instructions from Gianfrancesco to Zenobaldo): "... e per queste cossa poi comprender quanto perplesso sia l'animo nostro... ma dove vada l'onore nostro non lo comportasemo ad alcun modo, per non voler diventare dabate monaco." If the soldiers "saranno ad obedentia del conte Aloise.... non intendemo mettere pé in campe."

45. Arch. Gon. B.1607, fols.23-24, 14 Aug.1438, (Filippo Maria to Gianfrancesco): "... immo faciemus quicquid poterimus, ut classis ipsa citissime paretur, et expediatur.... Credimus enim et nos in ea consistere importantiam et bonum maximum status vestri et nostri, qui sunt et semper erunt unum et idem..." This was echoed in Zenebaldo's report of the same day in Arch. Gon. B. 1520, fol.49.
46. Ibid: "sed, obtento loco Roadi, quod presto futurum confidimus, exercitus ipse noster ibit, et se firmabit contra terram Urcearum Novarum et tunc vobis mittere poterimus, ac mittemus predictas gentes." In fact, Filippo Maria hinted that he might even be able to send Piccinino together with the whole army "si expediens fuerit". Filippo Maria always guarded himself by such phrases. Nevertheless, he promised to act quickly to counteract the threat from the Veronese.
47. Arch. Gon. B.1620, fol.50, 17 Aug.1438. (Zenebaldo to Gianfrancesco): "Io non sento ancor aparechamento alguno a questa armata che molto me dolie." Zenebaldo found this delay very difficult to reconcile with what Filippo Maria had previously indicated.
48. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 18 Aug.1438) (Gianfrancesco to Filippo Maria): "25 galeon., sex galearum et 80 barcarum armatorum..."
49. Filippo Maria was encouraging the activities of Gianfrancesco's agents in Padua "Maxime per obviare a li sinistri che puotriano occorrere per questa armata de Venetiani". (Arch. Gon. B.1620, fol.26, 24 Aug. 1438; Filippo Maria to Gianfrancesco).
50. Ibid., Filippo Maria was complaining to Gianfrancesco of the excessive wartime expenditure: "Ma gli puotremo ben meglio subvenire de gente cha de dinari, e più habelmente gli puotriamo subvenire de mille cavalli, cha de mille fiorini, perché habiamo le gente e non li dinari...."
51. A.S.M. Archivio Ducale, Reg. Duc. no.41, Rr als O, fols. 577-578.
52. e.g. in Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 21 Aug.1438 (Gianfrancesco to Zenebaldo): In this letter he also informed the Duke of the progress he was making in reinforcing the fortress of Sermide, the first important fortification on the Po on the eastern frontier of the Mantovano. Sforza had sent an envoy, Giovanni da Cremona, to discuss matters with Venice: "non cessassero di bater questo chiodo continuamente per mezanità del papa il quale ne e caldo e promptissimo."
53. Ibid. The Florentines were already planning to send Niccolò Valori to Milan: "... perché non è dubio chi harà Fiorentini harà el Conte Francesco, e cusì del Conte Francesco chi harà luno harà laltro..."
54. Ibid. "Certo, Zenebaldo, ne pare de maraveyare grandemente, considerato cum quanta spesa et instantia el prefaro Signore Messer lo Duca havia circato de retrare el dicto Conte dal amore de Venetiani, et vedendo adesso la soa Signoria da haver el zoco vinto afar le vendete di soi inimici, e quasi se po tegnir per farse Signore de Italia, che voia privarse de tal Capitano e dele zente che ha e farne forte li inimici soy.

55. Ibid: "... ricordando che quanto più presto ce farà forte de zente serà el meio, perché queste zente che habiamo non son da potere attendere a tante cose."
56. Arch. Gon. B.1607, fol.26, 24 Aug.1438 (Filippo Maria to Gianfrancesco): "... dicamo che nuy siamo certissimi chil habia sempre havuto verso nuy quello bono animo, de lo qualo ve a dicto, ni puotressemo may credere altramente."
57. Ibid: "... siando vuy forte de l'armata nostra gli inimici non obserano may fare asalto... e pertanto die e nocte faciamo attendere cum grandissima diligentia a la reparatione e armamento de li nostri galioni per mandargli zuso ala f. v. .... e siati certo che non gli perderemo tempo veruno in fare prestissimo spaciare e mandarve li dicti galioni."
58. Ibid: "... nuy debiamo havere scripto per septe nostre lettere al Conte Francesco de la quale cossa, pare pura che la f.v. se maraviglia.... perché non sapiamo vedere che persona de questo mondo la dovesse may credere vedendo che habiamo facta tanta spesa e tante altre cosse al prefato conte, come habiamo facto, per haverlo cum nuy."
59. Ibid: "... diciamo che sel vignerà lo vedremo molto voluntera e faremo quanto ricorda el prefato S. messer lo Marchese.... perché comprendiamo chiaramente chel dicie el vero."
60. Ibid: "... como sia ottenuto Rovado, el che crediamo serà presto cum lo aiuto de Deo, ve manderemo le gente de le quale, e como per altre ve habiamo scripto".
61. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 25 Aug.1438; copy of Niccolò d'Este's letter to Leonello, forwarded by the latter to Gianfrancesco: "... te advisamo chel prelibato ill. principe ce ha dito che zobia mattino se puoterano infallanter li galioni lezeri che son in tuto L. Sabato subseguente se partirà el capitaneo con lo resto, che son in summa galioni LXV; galee X, gittarole X; queste son nave che volano e coperte per li veretonti; barche XX, barbote coperte ligname grosso X, la qual armata dice non dubita, castigarà lo ill. s. nostro fratello Marchese de Mantoa dicendo noi mostreremo pure se lui ha facto bene a tradirce in questa forma. Et facemoli portar pena del suo malfare..."
62. Ibid: "Et in summa Leonello, qui se tiene certissimo che questa armata vincerà ogni riparo e provisione habia facto lo ill.s. nostro fratello."
63. Apparently the restitution of the Polesine was partly the Pope's idea. The documents were signed in Venice on 27 July, three days after Niccolò's arrival. See Tarducci, op.cit., p.305, footnote no.1.
64. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 24 Aug.1438 (Gianfrancesco to Zenebaldo): "nui havemo da più persone fidedigni, e maxime per relatione del Mag.Ugutione di Contrari novamente ritornato da Venesia, che larmata de Venetiani domane se de partir de Venesia per venirce adosso. Questa armata e grandissima Zanibaldo, benché non crediamo ne sia tanto quanto se dice, ma bon pezo apresso si...., e parme che le cosse di qua vadino molto lente.... et sollicita cum ogni istanza che... subito ne sia mandati quelli XX galioni..... queste cosse..... sono pericolosissime e da procurne damni infiniti."

65. e.g. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 25 Aug.1438 (Instructions to Zenebaldo). He had tried to raise 12,000 ducats by pawning goods in Ferrara, but because of Niccolò's conduct, he was doubtful whether the money would be forthcoming. He therefore instructed Zenebaldo as follows: "voremo tu vede se questa tal quantitate de denari, dando nuy bonissimo pegni, se poria haber li..."
66. Ibid. "Cercando de rimuovere ogni ombra e scropolo che deli facti nostri potesse cadere in la mente de quello signore. E di ciò te incareghemo asay." Zenebaldo was also asked to request 'bombardieri'.
67. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 25 Aug.1438 (Gianfrancesco to Filippo Maria): "... Ego maiorem q. unquam cepi animam firmissime dispositus vitam meam, filios meos obedientes, statum et omnia mea totaliter pro status cel. vre. a quo meus etiam dependet, .... et sic spero, venetorum predictorum impetus deo adiutore repimere: et eos cum sua tam potenti et rabiata armata, mala tractare."
68. Much of the background is discussed in chapter 4. See also Tarducci, op.cit., pp.305-306.
69. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 28 Aug.1438 (Gianfrancesco to Filippo Maria). There is also a letter of instruction to Zenebaldo. Both these documents are discussed in considerable detail by Tarducci on pp.306-7 and much of what follows parallels his description fairly closely.
70. Arch. Gon. B. 1607, fol.29, 31 Aug.1438 (Filippo Maria to Gianfrancesco): "... dicamo che venendo li suoy Ambassiatori..... li vedremo molto voluntera e gli faremo bona recoglienza secondo lusanza nostra, como meritano cussi notabili homini...."
71. Ibid: "E cum bene li denari non gli siano dati in termine el non è però che non se gli vogliano ben dare, e chel non gli vegna ben ad havere per modo e per forma chel non perderà nessuno...."
72. Ibid: "E fra le altre cose perché non gli habiamo ancora data nostra fiola si è perché non gie la dariamo mai, se primamente non sono tolte via le differentie chi sono tra lo Magnifico Capitano nostro et esso Conte,. In la remotione de le quali differentie confortiamo e pregamo la s.v. che gli voglia fare ogni opera a lui possibile e maxime cum lo prefato nostro capitano...."
73. In fact, in B.2185, 28 Aug. (as in note 67), Gianfrancesco was perplexed by information which he had received that Filippo Maria was deliberately encouraging Sforza to go over to the Venetians. This is discussed by Tarducci on p.315. The whole business seemed incredible, but this was quite in keeping with Filippo Maria's tortuous methods. In the final analysis he was convinced that Bianca as a diplomatic bait would ultimately lure him onto the Milanese side. This was an example of Visconti long-term strategy.
74. e.g. at the beginning of September he was using Torello to whip up pro-Visconti enthusiasm in the Bresciano amongst the Avogadro and Martinengo families (see Tarducci, p.317). Gianfrancesco was also involved in this. In Arch. Gon. B.1607, fol.31 (3 September) Filippo Maria was saying: "diciamo che nuy lassiamo ala f.v. che in questo proceda e faccia quello e quanto a ley pare, e como habiamo ferma speranza in vuy perché de tuto restaremo contentissimi".

75. Arch. Gon. B. 1607, 30 Aug.1438 (Filippo Maria to Gianfrancesco):  
 "Certificantes vos quod ad apparatus et expeditionem armate nostre galeonarum silicet triginta ex prestatioribus melioribus procedi facuimus die noctuque cum maxima celeritate et diligentia.... in re ista non deficimus nec deficere ullo modo disponimus neque erimus animo bene contenti, donec fuit huiusmoda armata totaliter expedita..."
76. Arch. Gon. B.1620, fol.53, 30 Aug.1438) (Zenebaldo to Gianfrancesco).
77. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol.55, 31 Aug.1438) (Zenebaldo to Gianfrancesco):  
 "Al facto de questa armata questo I.S. al prexente gie fa zò che puo perché sia in hordine non lassando mancare alguna cossa, cossi volesse Dio la fusse comenzata xv zorni più tosto, prego la preffata S.vra. me aduixa inquantì zorni la pensa dicta armata de Veneciani possa venire ad Hostillia, perché questo S. ma domandato molte persone in quanto tempo potra Vegnir..."
78. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol.57, 4 Sept. 1438: ".... ozo di 4 de questa con el nome de Dio el dicto Gabriele è partito, con el modo de poter amare gran parte de li 30 galioni, de li quali spera mandare forssi la mità lunedì appresso verso Mantoa, ed el resto quanto più presto li sarà possibile." Filippo Maria echoed this on 6 Sept: in B.1607, fol.31.
79. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 1 Sept.1438 (Filippo Maria to Zenebaldo): "Ala parte che vogliamo ordinare che le nostre gente manderemo di là siano ad obedientia sua, non siandoli el nostro Magnifico Capitaneo, dicemo che questo è molto ben ragione e che volemo fare perché gli vogliamo molto ben attendere quello gli habiamo promesso."
80. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 28 Aug.1438 (Filippo Maria to Gianfrancesco):  
 "Ringratio essa s.v. più che dire ne pensare potessi, ricevendo di ciò quello singolarissimo piacere e contento che potesse alcun fiolo e servitor dal suo optimo servitor e padre...." See also Tarducci, p.308, who considers the tenor of this reply to be far too subservient.
81. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 28 Aug.1438 (Gianfrancesco to Zenebaldo): ".... tu starai di continuo attento, habiando advertentia che sia senza alcuna demonstratione, a presentir de facti nostri da ogni canto, si che la signoria sua titubassi o fossi su la disposition dela qual ce haveva parlato el Conte Alvyse, o per alcun respecto stessee sospeso di provvedere al passare deladise e ale altre cosse necessarie, noi possiamo haverne piena notitia, per sapere quello haressemo a fare." Tarducci was quite right in suggesting that the relations between the two men could never be good "L'uno eliminava l'altro" (p.311).
82. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 30 Aug.1438. (Gianfrancesco to Zenebaldo):  
 ".... perché ..... non fosseno discordi col. conte e noi, perche tal modi poi considerare quanto seria ad incargo del honor nostro...." It is also interesting to note that in this same letter he informed Zenebaldo that, as a mark of his confidence in Milan, he had decided to send his youngest son, Gianlucido, to study in Pavia. Zaccharia del Rio was going to be sent to make the necessary preparations "chel ne pare questa seria optima cosa per dimostrare alSig. messer lo Duca per ogni via certa confidentia de noi".



83. Tarducci, p.312.
84. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 4 Sept.1438 (Gianfrancesco to Alvise): "Se ben habiamo inteso quanto la mag. vra. ce ha dito e referito per parte del I.S. messer to duca nostro singolarissimo padre, doppo li molti rasonamenti havuti tra nui in seme et etiam per mexanitate de Mathero de Corradi, in effecto è questo, che la Es. prenderà contento de metter in le mane nostre Bressa e lo bressano se prima la se acquistarse, o Verona o Vicenza acquistandole prima che Bressa, et che poi fosse in soa dispositione de darne liberamente o Bressa o Verona luna per cambio de l'altra, si che noi fossemo tenuti ad accetarla qual essa volesse e restituirge l'altra ge lhavessemo in le mane. Et ancora che vole cambiare per Vicenza o Padoa o Treviso, qual più ne piacerà."
85. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 11 Sept.1438 (Gianfrancesco to Zenebaldo).
86. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol.86, 2 Sept.1438 (Zenebaldo to Gianfrancesco). This is one of a number of letters in which Zenebaldo departs from the formal language of diplomacy and adopts a more openly emotional response. On the following day Gianfrancesco wrote in the following manner to Alvise: "novamente ne troviamo haver scritto a Zanibaldo qual tenemo apresso la excellentia soa..... et per simel di quelle, terre che offerite, restituirne cum quella condicione etc., ne pare etiam de non le acetare e sopastare finché avemo la risposta dal dicto Zanibaldo" (Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 3 Sept.1438; Gianfrancesco to Zenebaldo).
87. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 4 Sept.1438; Gianfrancesco's agreement with Alvise dal Verme. It ends: "Insuper perché speramo dever presto cum la gratia de dio insieme cum la M.Vra. passare ladese, pregamo la s.v. che voglia havere devuto riguardo al honor nostro." On the following day a copy was sent to Milan (Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 5 Sept.1438; Gianfrancesco to Zenebaldo).
88. Arch. Gon. B.1620, fol. 57, 4 Sept.1438 (Zenebaldo to Gianfrancesco): "Dopo che fu partito el conte Guido Torello per andar a Pavia e de li vegnir a Mantua verso ala parte de la s.v. me vedea menar lo coda per la barba e non dare el modo che Gabriele capo di ferro potesse andar alo armamento deli galeoni, e darelì pur bene longe atrovare li denari me despoxi de gridar tanto che laudaria ad orecchi al duca de Milan." Later on in the letter he criticises the transparent and insulting reasoning of Dal Verme and Filippo Maria: "Da poi ho sentito questo Ill. mo Signor ha opinione che la s.v. habia dentro de Brixia più che lui.... e così è stato intestato da questi vermi la prefata vostra signoria esser mal voluta dentro da Verona, dicendo che mal poriano suportare vuy li fussi signore ricordandosi le inimicitie antiche, e chel Duca liè tropo ben voluto per rispetto dela bona signoria fatali per li tempi passati: cossa che me vien volia dar de la testa contro terra, o farli dare altri piuttosto."
89. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 6 Sept.1438 (Gianfrancesco to Zenebaldo): "...habiamo di certo.... l'armata de costoro zà essere zunti in Corbole tre galee su le qual e Misser Pedro Lodrono...." He estimates that the fleet will be at the borders of the Mantovano in four days. This information was repeated in a letter to Filippo Maria on 9 September which also advised him to send reinforcements for Piccinino and Dal Verme because Gattamelata was making renewed attempts to cross the Mincio. His son Carlo was involved in defending this area.

90. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 11 Sept.1438.
91. Ibid, B.1620, 11 Sept.1438 (Zenobaldo to Gianfrancesco): "Io per altra haveva scritto ala s vostra che si partirà ben x o xii galioni, et vedendo che sono bosie." Furthermore, Filippo Maria was finding it difficult to raise men from elsewhere because of pressure imposed upon him by Piccinino. Zenobaldo says: "tuti me davano bone parole e poche fati." Five days earlier Filippo Maria was writing "senza fallo ne siano mandati li mille cavalli a numero como rechesta e forse maiore summa, e de questo stasitive de bona voglia." (Arch. Gon. B.1607, fol.31, 6 Sept.1438).
92. Arch. Gon. B.2185; undated, but catalogued under 1438. The contents refer specifically to negotiations with Dal Verme: "Me pare esser in uno laberinto ad intendere queste tal pratiche, ma spero in dio che la s.v. cum la sua usata prudentia saverà proveder al tuto." This paper appears together with instructions to Matteo de Corrado, Gianfrancesco's envoy to Dal Verme.
93. Sanuto, col.1065. This agrees in substance with Platina's description of events (p.344): "Attigerat iam Padum classis quae tardim, quam belli gerendi ratio exigebat, subvecta, Mantuano tempus ad ea loca munienda ac firmanda praesidio dedit, quibus a Veneto aliquid incommodi obvenire poterat. Ad Sermedum enim et Hostilium Reverumque, quae in ripa Padi sunt sita, palas oblongos et grossis duplici ac triplici ordine in flumine defixit, catenis colligatos quo navibus in terram accessus vertaretur. Ad haec frequentia Castella, propugnacula, tormenta in ripis locis opportunis disposita, unde hostium classis detineri posset, quo minus per Padum subveneretur."
94. Ibid. See also Romanin, op.cit., vol.4, p.142: "... ne meglio andavano ai Veneziani le cose sul Po, che contrariato anche dalla stagione secca, per la quale scarse erano le acque del Po, nulla poté operare, e fu uopo richiamare quel' armata."
95. There are a number of references in S.S. reg.14, to continuing negotiations for the rest of the year, notably fols.143,143t., 187, 187t, 188. These negotiations were increasingly more successful.
96. For a consideration of this campaign see Soranzo, pp.83-5 and Da Soldo, p.14. Rovato fell on 6 September (Sanuto, col.1074).
97. See Soranzo, p.84. Erolì, pp.115ff., Sanuto, col.1064. Tregnani (Br.), p.47.
98. Da Soldo, pp.14 & 15.
99. Soranzo, pp.86-7. Sanuto, col.1064: "Adunque Gattamelata.... vedendosi essere serrato in Brescia.... e non vedendo modo di potere passare sicuramente per venire nel Veronese.... andò pe' monti, e sulle creste delle montagne per la via Trento, cavalcando di' e notte....E tanto fece, ch'egli giunse ad Arcò e passo sul Veronese, ma scorticò più di 600 cavalli." See also Erolì, p.117.

100. Simonetta, "Rerum Gestarum Francisci Sfortie", cit., p.82.
101. Sanuto, cols. 1064-5; "Fu preso ne' Pregadi di fare Capitan Generale il Magnifico Gattamelata, e donargli una casa da stazione in questa Terra, la quale fu quella del Conte Luigi dal Verme sul campo di San Paolo. Item, si dava al detto Gattamelata condotta di cavalli 3,000 e di fanti 500 e ducati 500 al mese per provigione della sua persona."
102. Eroli, p.122, Treccani (Br.) vol.2, p.55.
103. According to Da Soldo most of the month of October was taken up not only with preparations for the siege, but also with skirmishing with the enemy: "E in questo modo se stete da trei dì de ottobrio sempre mai ogni zorno scaramuzando cum loro per fina alli 4 de novembrio 1438." (p.17).
104. De Soldo provides the best description; see pp.17ff. See also Treccani (Br.) vol. 2, pp.54-72; Sanuto, cols. 1067-1073. See also E. Manelmi, Commentariolum de obsidione Brixiae a.MCCCCXXXVIII, 2, ed. G.A.Astezati (Brescia 1728).
105. Platina, op.cit., p.345: "Tum Piceninus et Mantuanus, veluti hac contemptu irritati, aucto militum numero, bombardas crebris in locis ad Turram longam (id ei loco nomen est) disposuit, quibus brevi adeo moenia et turres sunt disiectae, ut plures civium, desperata salute, de deditiōne faciēda cogitaverunt."
106. S.S. reg.14, fol. 164t, 16 Nov. 1438. These negotiations were conducted by Marco Foscari and Federico Contarini.
107. S.S. reg.14, fol.168.
108. Da Soldo, p.28.
109. Eroli, p.125.
110. Da Soldo, pp.28-9: "Niccolò Picenino et il Marchese di Mantova... feceno granda adunanza de cernidi et feceli andar fin a quelli logi de Archo per la via del lago. E simelmente gli andò Taliano Forlano com molta gente d'armi a cavallo e saccomani assai a piede." According to Soranzo (p.91) Furlano had first of all allowed the Gatteschi to pass but subsequently pursued them.
111. See Soranzo, p.91, Platina, p.350, Eroli, p.125, Da Soldo, p.29.
112. See Eroli, p.126 and document no. XLV in the appendix; Soranzo, p.92.
113. S.S. reg. 14, fol.180t, 6 Feb.1439.
114. Da Soldo, p.30. Parte inedita della Cronaca di Anonimo Veronese (1438-1445, 1488-1491). (Nuova Historia, Verona, 1955).
115. Da Soldo, p.30: "Si diceva esser tra galee brigantini et altri fusti ben da circa 80."
116. According to the Anonimo Veronese it was around 15 February (p.95). See Soranzo, p.93, note 1.
117. Sanuto, col. 1073: ".... si ebbe nuova come il Marchese di Mantova e Niccolò Picenino erano venuti coll' armata del Duca di Milano per

- ritrovare la nostra, e per la via di sopra colle genti d'arme, per modo che furono alle mani, e ne furon morti molti di que' del Duca, e presi molti, e quelli degli schiopetti furono tagliati a pezzi. Etiam pe' nostri furono prese parecchie navi e burchiele, che andavano da un luogo all'altro. La vittoria fu minore di quello che ne fu detto. I morti furono 500 e i prigionieri 500."
118. Soranzo (p.94) remarks that on this occasion only the materials would be sent; the ships themselves would be built 'in situ'.
  119. e.g. in April the Senate considered sending grain to Schio and thence through the Vallarsa and Val di Lappio to Torbole and then by water to Ponale. See Soranzo, p.94, note 1.
  120. Sanuto, col. 1073: "S'ebbe nuova d'essere venuto alla Rotta del Castagnaro 28 Galeoni del Marchese di Mantova, per tagliare le Palate, ch'ivi son fatte." S.S. reg.14, fol.192, 23 March 1439 (Senate to Francesco Barbadigo, ambassador to the Pope): "... qui quidem marchio etiam paravit et secrete misit ad ruptam Castegnari multas galeonos et barbotas et tam per terram quam per aquam omnes hostes predicti propter lacum nostrum Leniaci se reduxerunt iamque per viribus suis fecerunt et faciunt experientiam transeundi atticem cum ingenti periculo statum nostri." The Venetians were using this danger in order to persuade Sforza to join them immediately in Lombardy. In fol.192t. exactly the same letter is addressed to Sforza himself. See also Soranzo, pp.94-5.
  121. Da Soldo, p.31: "possa, del ditto mese de marzo, si levò (i.e. Piccinino) et andete in Veronese et andò a lozar a Cerea e in quelle altre terrezolette circondante. Et lì stete piùor giorni a far fare una certa fossa per condur certi suoi galioni in l'Adesse per dover buttar uno ponte.... buttò uno ponte sopra l'Adese a dispetto de nove millia cavalli e forsi sei millia fanti che haveva Gattamelata lì al impeto delli inimici, li quali mai non fecero contrasto alchuno alli inimici, nel passare per difetto de uno messer Andrea Donato, Provisor in campo, el qual non voleva. Passato ch'el fu, mise campo a Lignano com le bombarde."
  122. Da Soldo, p.31.
  123. He had been attacked by a contingent of Brescian troops under the command of Pietro Avogadro. Furlano was forced to flee and many prisoners were taken. See Da Soldo, p.31.
  124. Soranzo, p.99.
  125. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 26 Jan.1439. (Letter to Paola from her agent).
  126. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, 18 July 1439. Zenebaldo complains about this to Paola; he speaks of "le extreme necessitate nostre...." Later in the letter he says: "Per lo spazamento de queste zente darme è prolungato a non poter haver denari.... io non li posse ne so far più." See also Arch. Gon. B. 1228, fol.49 (Bartolomeo Pendaglia in Ferrara to Paola).
  127. For details see S.S. reg.14, fols 187-8. See Smith, op.cit., p.97; also Simonetta, p.50, who adds that a secret clause in the agreement limited his activities to two years.

128. There is a very good discussion of the relationship between Sforza and Filippo Maria in Smith, pp.97-100 et. seq.: "Eventually this egoistic desire to put Sforza in his place became an obsession, dwarfing all other policy, even the traditional conflict with Venice and Florence." (p.100).
129. e.g. See Osio, vol. iii, pt.1, pp.177-9; e.g. p.178, 14 April 1439: "....sed, ut non dubitamus illustrem Magnificentiam vestram sensisse, est Nicolaus Piccininus cum Marchione Mantue, et omnibus gentibus inimicis prope Acticis flumen, temptans omnibus viribus et industria transire ad damna nostra, quod, si occurreret quod Deus avertet, cognoscimus in hoc casu statum nostrum subjacere manifesto periculo..." On 6 May the Senate called him "solum et unicum nostrum refugium ac remedium ad conservationem et reintegrationem status nostri." (S.S. reg.14, fol.203).
130. See Treccani (Mi.), p.335. Also Decembrio, "Vita Filippo Maria..." cit., p.263.
131. S.S. reg.14, fol. 209t, 20 June 1439. When Este had sounded out Venice on the prospects of Gianfrancesco, they had replied: "parati sumus iniuriam a predicto Marchione Mantue receptarum oblivisti et eum reassumere et acceptare ad benevolentiam nostram". (fol.210t). For earlier attempts at this see Soranzo, op.cit., p.101.
132. S.S. reg.14, fol.214t, 30 July 1439 (To Pisani): "et dicimus quod si... aquiret civitatem Mantue, contenti sumus quod ipsa civitas cum toto territorii Mantuano excellentie sue remaneat." The Venetians guarded themselves by saying that in the event of successful negotiations with Gianfrancesco, he would still have Cremona together with all the Cremonese. This was repeated on 24 June 1440 (S.S. reg.15, fol. 27t).
133. Much of this description is from Soranzo, pp.103-4.
134. Arch. Gon. 1620, fol. 70, 18 July 1439; (Zenebaldo to Paola) Zenebaldo was equally sceptical about any despatch of money. For instance, on 18 August he writes that 10,000 ducats had been promised; but he adds: "ma veramente credo esser ingannato a questo... dato che de le altre ne siano dicte asai buxie." (B.1620, fol.72).
135. Ibid: ".... hora essendo venuto el conte Francesco.... non posseno pasar per alltra via che se darano su la testa. Io me moro sentendo el mio Signore e messer Carlo in questo periculla. Dio per sua pietà li guarda...."
136. Da Soldo, p.34: "Uno giorno del ditto mese di Auosto si levò com una parte dil campo e venne in Gardesana credendosi trovar la nostra amata forta sul lago. Et stete in Gardesana ben quatro giorni. De la qual venuta a tutte noi di Bressa ne fu una grande alegreza videndolo ad approssimarse in quel modo. In cavo de quatro zorni si levò de Gardesana e andò a Pontone. E li stete circa doi zorni. Possa si levò e andò a Zevi."

137. Da Soldo, p.35: "Quando lo vide (i.e. Sforza) andar a Zevi, subito ritornò... e andò a lozarse a Vigase lui e lo Marchese di Mantua com suo campo. Et lì se feceno molto forti de fosse, de sbarre e de altre cose, et steteno lì grand tempo."
138. Around the middle of August he was beaten by Taliano Furlano just outside Salò. See Soranzo, p.105 and Da Soldo, pp.35-6. See also Simonetta, p.86.
139. Da Soldo, p.37. He went by water but was assisted on land by Alvyse de San Severino who reached Riva by way of Moncastello.
140. Simonetta, p.87: "Magna earum pars capta est, quarum in numero fuere Carolus Gonzaga, Johannis Francisci Mantuani principis filius, Caesar Martinengus, Scaramor Vicecomes adolescens, alique permulti clari nominis iuri...." Sanuto (col.1083) includes a copy of a letter which Sforza and Gattamelata had written to the Doge describing the course of the battle.
141. Arch. Gon. B. 2094 fol.268, 19 Sept.1439. Gianfrancesco to Paola from Vigasio, in which he and Filippo Maria have agreed "de mutar uno capitulo.... cioè, che dove la conducta de le zente chel ce da dice in persona de Carlo nostro figlolo se rescripta e dica in noy, lassando star Carlo...." See also A.S.M., Archivio Ducale Extra Dominium cart. 14 Fol. 24, 15 Sept.1439.
142. His youngest son Gianlucido was a student in Pavia at this time. There is a series of letters from Gianfrancesco's agent Zaccharia de Rio de Padova running from 24 Feb.1439 to 19 Sept.1439 reporting his good progress. (Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fols. 74-77 incl.).
143. ".... facendogli la notte stessa, seguita alla rotta, portar via, come fosse un cadavere d'un appestato, in un sacco da un robùto e fedele famiglio Todeschino, e metter in salvo a Riva." (Soranzo, pp.107-8).
144. S.S. reg.14, fol.228t, 28 Sept.1439.
145. Da Soldo, pp.38-9: "Niccolò Picenino e il Marchese de Mantua erano intrati in Verona con tutto la suo perforzo. Subito el Conte Francesco si levò da campo alli 17 de novembrio di notte e andò verso Verona. Et fu bisogno andar per le montagne et trovò che Verona era tutta quanta persa, e forteze et ogni casa salvo lo Castello Veshio o quello de Sancto Felice et una delle porte."
146. S.S. reg. 14, fol.237.
147. Soranzo, p.109. There is quite a good detailed description of the battle in Erolì, pp.135-141; also Da Soldo, p.39; and Simonetta, p.90.
148. Da Soldo, p.39: "Ne fu presi in grande quantità e fu preso carri assai et cernedi assai di quelli Mantuani." Simonetta (p.90) concurs: "Magnus certe virorum numerus ex mantuano delectu captus est, quem Johannes Franciscus per eos dies ad se evocaret et partim portarum, arcibus, partim praetorio partimque locis aliis per urbem custodiendis distribuerat."

149. Erolì, p.140.
150. Simonetta, p.90: "Piccininus vero ac mantuanus ipse, qui ut diximus, in urbiculam se reduxerant, diffisi viribus, urbicula effuso cursu, per planiciem illam veronensem potentissiman effuso cursu totam noctem ierunt, nec restituerunt, donec alii Mantuam, alii ad proxima municipia pervenerunt; ipsi autem duces cum paucis Valegium se receperunt... Verona igitur die tertio, postquam capta est, per hunc modum recepta."
151. Da Soldo, p.40: "Nicolò Picenino non fese niente se non passar et andò a lozar.... a Rotingo e a Saiano in Franza Curta. Et commenzorno a cazar fuoco per tutto e bruorno tutto quanto Gussago e Cellatica."
152. Soranzo, p.110.
153. Da Soldo, p.42.
154. This is examined by Soranzo at the end of his article (pp.110-114).
155. Da Soldo, p.43: "Ritornando a Nicolò Picenino, andò a Riva de Trento com una grande gente lui e lo Marchese de Mantova, credo per veder de guastar et affogar la nostra armata che si lavorava a Torbole: et gli fece delli assalti ma posseva far perché il Conte Francesco gli teneva una grande fanteria".
156. A.S.M. Archivio Ducale, Reg. Duc. no.41, Rr als O; fols. 527t-528, 20 April 1440 which reconfirmed the fiefs in the original agreement. See also A.S.M. Archivio Ducale, reg. Duc. no. 30 M als Bb (Lorenzo Martignoni), fol. 500, 13 May 1441: "... cum pactis modis et conventionibus de quibus et prout dicto procura suc melius videbitur..." See also Smith, op.cit., pp.135-6.
157. As early as 22 July 1439 Filippo Maria had appointed the bishop of Como, Gherardo da Landriano, to be his representative in peace negotiations with Venice and Genoa. See Osio, vol. III, pt.1, p.181, doc. no. CLXXXVIII.
158. Sanuto, col.1086.
159. S.S. reg.15, fol. 9, 9 Jan.1440. (letter to Jacopo Antonio Marcello) "de permutatione persone dni. Caroli de Gonzaga cum Mag.Dno. Malatesta genero suo." The Senate recommended delay "quia expectabamus quod Ill. Don. Marchio Esten. mediante persona ipsius Caroli posset reducere Marchionem Mantue ad aliquam compositionem nobiscum."
160. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 2 Feb.1440 (copy of letter to Sforza).
161. Arch. Gon. B. 2094, fols. 285-6, 4 Feb.1440: "El conte Francesco Sforza adesso ce ha risposto chel rimane contento de l'ordine dato de far al cambio dal S. Malatesta ad Carlo (fol.286)". See also Simonetta, pp.92-3 and Sanuto, col.1090.
162. Da Soldo, p.43.

163. Osio, vol.III, pt.1, p.194, doc. no. CLXXXVIII: "offerunt et cum effectum prefatam dominam Blancham tamquam veram et legitimam sponsam, consortem, seu uxorem prefati Comitis Francisci Sfortie generi et filii carissimi prefati domini Ducis...." This was to be accomplished by the end of January 1440.
164. A.S.M. Archivio Ducale, Carteggio Visconteo, Extra Dominium, cart. no. 14 fol. 29, 5 Apr. 1440: "ut certas galeonos nras. in flumine Pade existentes conduci faciat in Lacum Garde ut armata nra. in dicto lacu existens potentior fiat et valeat hostilem classem ibi existentem opprimere et perfligare."
165. Arch. Gon. B. 1228, fol.54, 25 Apr.1440; letter of Carlo Nuvoloni refers to his return: "Ho inteso come la Ill. s.v. e ritornata da Milano sana e de bona voglia et ne ho havuto summa consolatione..." On 9 April Gianfrancesco's arrival was imminent because elaborate preparations were being made for his welcome "... con abbondanti spese di ciborie..." Luchino de Toscanis was sent to make provision in all the areas Gianfrancesco was to pass through (Gli Atti Cancellereschi Visconteo vol.3, pt.2, no.570). Gianfrancesco and Zenebaldo seemed to have achieved a measure of success because on 25 April a safe-conduct was issued to a number of merchants to trade freely with Mantua (no.583). On 28 April a licence was issued "di fare condurre 1,000 staia di grano a misura parmigiana" to the Mantovano during the month of May (no.587).
166. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol.82, 14 Apr.1440 (Matteo de Corrado to Paola): "Adviso la I.S. vra. come .... a hore xviii li Illu. nostro Signore e andato da lo Illu. Signor Messer lo duca acompagnati.... da molti zentilhomeni. E per lo simele hanno quello accompagnato per fin al logo dove alloza la S. sua i quali del conscio cum li zentilhomeni partiti son andati incontra al ill. Misser Lodovico. el quale arivava qui inanzi le xxii hore." There is some rather slender evidence which might indicate some previous improvement in the relations between Ludovico and Gianfrancesco. In September 1439 a modification in the original agreement with Milan allowed Gianfrancesco to give the condotta arranged for Carlo (500 lances and 500 inf.) either to Carlo or to Ludovico, or to both (Gli Atti Cancellereschi Viscontei, vol.3, pt. 1, p.102). See also J. Dumont "Corps Universel Diplomatique" (Amsterdam 1726-31), vol. 3, pt.1, p.84. He had insisted in his original treaty with Filippo Maria that Ludovico should not be employed in Milanese forces (Dumont p.53). See B. Corio, "Storia di Milano" (Milan 1856), vol.2, p.633, and Smith, op.cit., pp.35-6.
167. See Simonetta, p.69. There was a long association between the two men.
168. Mahnke, op.cit., pp.37-40: "Ludovico's new name 'il turco' suggests how he had matured during the years of his exile."
169. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol.83, 15 April 1440 (Matteo to Paola): "... e zonto ala presentia sua, se zetoe aterra, e disse queste paole. Signor mio, la humanita de la S. vostra se ha degnata a renderme gratia a mi indigno suo fiolo. Lo illu. nostro si ge respose: Lodovigo, io te ho perdonado liberamente, e siando obediante, come tu dice, te haverò per quello bon fiolo che tu hebbe may. e esso misser Lodovigo se ge zetoe ale gambe ad abbracciarlo."



170. Ibid.
171. Arch. Gon. B.5, no. 24, 12 May 1441; further renewed on 20 Dec.1442 (no.27).
172. A.S.M. Archivio Ducale, Reg. Duc. no. 30, Mals Bb, fols. 477-480, 23 May 1440. Filippo Maria and his 'concilio secreto' approved that Ludovico and his legitimate successors in the male line should be invested with Orcinuoovi. Furthermore, Filippo Maria promised Ludovico his protection as long as the latter continued to support Viscontean interests.
173. On 4 May Matteo was writing to Gianfrancesco: "Alo Ill. Messer. Ludovico vostro fiolo pare ogni hora uno anno de potersi levar de qua.... " Arch. Gon. B.1620, fol.84.
174. For an account of the battle see Sanuto, col.1092. Apparently the Milanese standard was captured and borne in triumph to Venice.
175. Da Soldo, p.46.
176. Arch. Gon. B. 1225, fol.55: "Questa matina ho inteso de un locho autenticho chel Conte intende vignire a campo a Vigasio.... obtenendo quello locho a me pare che li circumstante non stariano bene per lo incursione poriano fare li inimici. Son certo la s.v. provederà quanto bisognerà."
177. Sanuto, col.1093.
178. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol. 84. See also B.2185, 6 May (Gianfrancesco to Filippo Maria).
179. Arch. Gon. B. 1225, fol.71.
180. Ibid. 1607, fol.36.
181. Atti Cancellereschi Viscontel, vol. 2, pt. 1, Decreto no. 620.
182. Arch. Gon. B.1225, fol.71: ".... in quanto chavesse segurezza dalla s. vostra de non essere impedito nel suo passione."
183. e.g. Arch. Gon. B. 1225, fol.74, 21 May 1440; speaking of Niccolò: "certo lho veduto hora più pieno e satio de Venetiani...." There are numerous other similar references.
184. Arch. Gon. V.1607, fol.35, 3 May 1440 (Filippo Maria to Gianfrancesco in cypher): "advisamus f. vram. q. hodie, favente deo, conclusum est negotium Magnifici domini Borsi Esten. ex qua conclusione non ambiguus statì vri. et nri. multa bona succedere." The Venetian displeasure was reported by Calcagnini on 27 May (Arch. Gon. B. 1225, fol.77).
185. Arch. Gon. B. 1225, fol.74. "Del passar de Messer Borso ala s. vostra, piaceva a luy, e che ad ogni modo festi ben li facti nostri riceverà contento."
186. Arch. Gon. B. 1225, fol.74.

187. Ibid: "Et che remettendo queste facende el s. messer lo duca in luy, e vuy, non fa dubio chel ne traria bonissimo effecto.... et che aciò bisogneria la s. vostra se inzegnasse e forzasse indur el prefato s. començar a far si che li dicti Fiorentini e conte potisse pigliar de luy confidentia."
188. Arch. Gon. B. 1225, fol.75. It also seems that Calcagnini was given special instructions to concentrate upon him: "Ch'el me e parso haverge tocato el cuore..."
189. Ibid. 21 May 1440. Sforza's agent was a certain Messer Agnolo. Calcagnini reports: "che tuto pur tende ad bona spem, capiendam del desiderio nostro..."
190. Arch. Gon. B. 1225, fol.76, 27 May 1440 (Calcagnini to Gianfrancesco): "Uguzon dalabadia se aricomanda ala s. vostra et have dicto haver questa matina ricevuto uno brevetto de Messer Agnolo responsivo ad uno suo per lo quale lo sollicitava a procurar chel Conte facesse la voluntade nostra, dicendoge per darli più da pensar che ogni dimora poria portar periculo.... in effecto el conclude chel prefato conte e optimo disposto a fare quello vorà questo ill. s. e cussi fiorentini...."
191. Arch. Gon. B. 1607, fol.38, 2 June 1440: "... cioè, che esso misser lo marchese vole fare una liga in la quale sia la s. vostra, esso s. marchese, noi, li fiorentini, Conte Francesco, et anchoi li Genoesi si noi voremo. Ala celebratione de la qual liga, lo deto s. messer lo marchese non mette alcun dubio che la non habia effecto."
192. Ibid. As far as Padua was concerned, Filippo Maria was encouraging Gianfrancesco to intrigue with the prominent Paduan Jacomo Scrovegni. Arch. Gon. B.1607, fol.37, 22 May 1440.
193. Arch. Gon. B. 1225, fol.81, 1 June 1440. (Calcagnini to Gianfrancesco). "Ugutione de Contrariis dica dicto amico dice che a questi di è stato uno messo secreto dal prefato Conte che stete per gran spatio cum luy, e che quando esso conte ussi fuera dela camera.... hebbe a dire a Ser Agnolo, credo suo cancelliero, "que crediti de questo duca , el me fa tante promesse e de darne la Bianca a Ferrara o a Mantoa o dove voglio, e farne tante cosse, che non obstate io me habia ritrovato molte volte da luy ingannato, non so que dno.?"
194. Sanuto, col. 1096: "A dì 14 s'ebbe che il Conte Francesco avea recuperato tra buone e rie nel Veronese e nel Bresciano 34 fortezze, sicché le cose succedono bene. S'ebbero lettere da Pasqual Malipiero, Provveditore di campo, del dì 10 come s'erano avuti due passi d'Oglio, e subito erano corse le nostre genti fino a Cremona, e menato a rastello quello che trovarono, e fecero gran bottino." See also F. Bettoni, Storia della Riviera di Salò (Brescia 1880), pp.110-111.
195. e.g. Osio, vol. iii, pt.1, p.209. no. CCXIII, 14 June 1440. Filippo Maria encourages the inhabitants of Soncino "ad fortificationem ipsam incessanter, et die noctuque procedi faciant et providant..." Filippo Maria's resources were distributed as follows: Dal Verme to reinforce the Adda, Arasmino Trivulzio to Lodi, Emmanuele Secco and Marco Pozzobonelli to Martinengo, Marcolo Mariano to Casalmaggiore, Navarino de Novara to Palazzolo, Apicino di Vi-queria at Lovere, Pavesio da Mezzana at Pontoglio and Antonello da Inzago at Soncino (Atti Cancellereschi, op.cit., 1, 10, 14, 15 June 1440 respectively). See also Treccani (Br. p.73, Sanuto, col.1097, Da Soldo, pp.47-48.)

196. Da Soldo, p.48.
197. Arch. Gon. B. 1224, fol.83 (Calcagnini to Gianfrancesco): "Uguzon delabbadia me dice chel s. messer lo duca ha scritto a Simonino (Ghillino) che se debia per sua parte chiarire da quello illustre Signore sel ge pare et vuole chel faci pase o guera; siando una volta Madonna Biancha moglie del Conte como el dice che la è, saperia confortare la excel. sua, che vedesse de dargela effectualmente vogliandola tuor el conte filialmente cum bon amore e caritade, che non mancheria..... de redrizare le cosse e nostro modo."
198. Ibid. At the end of the letter he noted that Piccinino at that time was at Città del Castello but was making plans "per trasferirse de qua cum ogni prestezza."
199. Osio, vol. iii, pt. 1, p.208, no. CCXII, 13 June 1440: "El ne fi refferido el magnifico messer Carlo da Gonzaga cum alcune zente d'arme essere venuto a Lunado per correre a Calanado, et in Riviera et ribater questa strada de pé de monte et damnezare queste terre che sono venute a la obedia de la nostra ill.s."
200. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol.86, 27 June 1440 (Corrado to Gianfrancesco): "Questa matina lo Ill. misser Lodovico vostro fiolo mandae a dir a questo ill. s. ch'ello havea proveduto la Riva de Adda et chel ritrovava in alcuni logi che la le rive al fiume de Adda era grande distantia et che luno e laltro era uno padulo dove cavalli per modo alcuno, non se poteriano adoperare."
201. Sanuto, col. 1097, 20 June: "Ancora la sera vennero nuove, che i nostri aveano avuto Casalmaggiore, e due luoghi del Marchese di Mantova, Marmirolo e Viadana."
202. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol. 86, and especially fol. 88 (30 June): "tanto carestia del dinaro". Piccinino had asked for money to return to Lombardy.
203. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol.87, 28 June 1440. (Corrado to Gianfrancesco): "Questo Illmo. s. me ha ditto in grande secreto chel tole per uno bonissimo signo chel Conte Francesco sia levato de campo dove era e andato a Caravazo sel se firerà li e non vada altroe."
204. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol.89, 1 July 1440: "li inimici hano anchora havuto Caravazo per quello se dica, ma la rocha se tene anchora et elie morto secondo se dice, da una bombardetta, el Signore Lione. Non so quello che farano, dubito non se voltano verso lo Cremonese che non pria esser non venessero a li danni vostri dio se provea."
205. Arch. Gon. B.1620, 2 July 1440 (Corrado to Gianfrancesco): "Lui (Filippo Maria) me rispose chio dovea credere havendo li inimici se potea dir, suso le porte de Milano, chel gie farà provisione sel potesse. Et chel faceva rasone che a levar el Capitano, li Signori da Arimino, e lo Signore da Faenza gie voria LXXXVIII m. ducati. Postea gie restava la metade de le sue zente che non haveano anchora havute dinari, senza chel seria bisogno remetter in ponto quelli chi sono rotti, et che lui non sapea da qual canto el dovesse començar a ritrovarli."

206. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 4 July 1440 (Gianfrancesco to Corrado):  
"el sa bene che non havemo un soldo da poterge mandare". He goes on to get Corrado to press for at least 200 ducats for Ludovico "e faci metter al conto nostro mandandoli ad esso Ludovico per lo viver suo."
207. Arch. Gon. B. 1225, fol.85, 3 July 1440 (Calcagnini to Gianfrancesco).
208. Ibid., 1620, fol.91, 3 July 1440 (Corrado to Gianfrancesco).
209. Ibid., 1607, fol.39, 6 July 1440. (Filippo Maria to Gianfrancesco):  
"Perché a nui e al tuto necessario levare alcune de le nostre gente da Cremona et farle venire qui in Riva dadda per proibire el passare al Conte Francesco... preghiamo et caricamo la franternità vostra... che vi piazza, per dece o dodece dì, mandare de li vostri a Cremona da cavallo et da pede più che possidi, et tore el carico de la conservatione de quella terra, per ben del stado nostro et vostro, considerato che quella citade de tanta importantia quanta sa la signoria vostra..."
210. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 4 July 1440. (Gianfrancesco to Corrado).
211. Ibid., 7 July 1440 (Gianfrancesco to Corrado).
212. Ibid., 8 July 1440 (Gianfrancesco to Filippo Maria).
213. Ibid., 1225, fol.92, 9 June (Calcagnini to Gianfrancesco). "persuadandose chel conte non potrà però fare cussi grande li bocconi como mostra in parole."
214. e.g. on 23 July 1440 (Arch. Gon. B. 1225, fol.97). Generally it amounted to very little.
215. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 14 July 1440 (Gianfrancesco to Calcagnini).
216. Ibid., 1620, fol.93, 11 July 1440 (Corrado to Gianfrancesco).
217. Ibid., 2185, 14 July 1440 (Gianfrancesco's instructions to Corrado).
218. Gianfrancesco himself had been taking some remedial measures for defence. For instance, on 5 August 1440 the inhabitants of the Serraglio were ordered to remain there for the defence of the area. There were grave penalties for evasion (Arch. Gon. B. 2038/9, fasc. 4; (Gridario).)
219. For a fuller consideration see Bernoni Le Vicende di Asola, cit., pp.112-120. Amadei, op.cit., p.30.
220. S.S. reg. 15, fols.30-32t, 18 - 30 July: "... pro securitate nostra parere nostrum esset ut idem Marchio de Mantua expellatur nam existente ea civitate in manibus sue."
221. See G.D.Pasqualigo, Lonato e Contorni (Castiglione delle Stiviere 1873); pp.17ff. See also Sanuto, col.1100. Also Arch. Gon. B. 1600, 26 August 1440; Capitula per Provisore exercitus comessa hominibus Lonati.
222. S.S. reg.15, fol.35t, 13 Aug.1440 (Senate to Malipiero).
223. Sanuto, col. 1100: "A dì 17 (Aug.) S'ebbe Peschiera per forza, e fu messa a sacco. Dipoi ebbero la Rocca per gran battaglia, e fu morta assaissima gente... e dipoi s'ebbe etiam Valegio co' Castelli a patti."
224. E.g. S.S. reg.15, fo..39, 30 August 1440. They wanted to isolate Gianfrancesco from Filippo Maria; any agreement with Mantua was to be strictly on their terms.

225. Simonetta, p.98: "Mantua eadem difficultate, quam de Cremona diximus, obsideri ea tempestate nullo pacto poterat, ubi Johannes Franciscus marchio una cum Ludovico Sanctoseverinate, quem ad eum Phillippus post Francisci a Transaduanis discessum auxilio miserat, magnis viribus sese continebat."
226. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol.95, 5 Aug.1440. (Corrado to Gianfrancesco).  
"... in questi dì el Conte Francesco gie havea mandato a dire che sel era contento de attendere ala pace vecchia essendo restituite tute le forteze tolte ala s.v., de darle la figliola et Cremona e Crema nele mane per segurezza del dote, zoé de CL m. ducati..."
227. S.S. reg.15, fol.37, 20 Aug.1440 (Instructions to Vittore Bragadino).
228. Sanuto, col.1100: ".... per dala per moglie al Conte Francesco la qualcosa si trattava; dove stette per alcuni mesi...."
229. Historia Florentina, in R.I.S. vol. XX. col.415.
230. c.f. Smith, op.cit., p.100.
231. S.S. reg. 15, fol.42, 7 Sept.1440.
232. Ibid., fol.51t. 6 Nov.1440: "Et si idem Marchio Mantue ob hanc causam ad nos aliquam personam secretam ul. etiam nos secretam mittere volet, contenti sumus ut ipa. secure et libere huc venire..."
233. This feeling is certainly apparent in February 1441.( S.S. reg. 15, fol.68.).
234. S.S. reg.15, fol.54, 2 December 1440. (Instructions to Leonardo Venier).
235. L. Collinson Morley, The Story of the Sforzas (Routledge, 1933), p.40: "Sforza quickly discovered that Visconti had no intention of throwing away a pawn so valuable as his daughter, though he was ready to use her to hold him in play as long as possible."
236. Osio, vol. iii, pt.1, p.214, no. CCXVII, 7 October,1440. See also p.211, no. CCXVI, 2 Oct.1440.
237. Margherita had died, according to Sanuto, on 29 July 1440: "A di 29 s'ebbe d'essere morta la figliuola del Marchese di Mantova, maritata nel figliuolo del Marchese di Ferrara" (col.1080). I have not been able to find any documentary evidence in Mantua to substantiate this date.
238. Osio, op. and vol.cit., p.218, no. CCXVIII, 7 Oct.1440.
239. Arch. Gon. B. 1225, fol.103, 23 Nov. 1440. (Calcagnini to Gianfrancesco): "de pace dice che sono grandemente desiderosi, e che aperte dicano se concluderà." Calcagnini speaks of growing resentment in Venice against paying war taxation.

240. Ibid., Contrari suggested to Calcagnini: "Et che non resta de battere el ferro cum bon modo cum questi Venetiani."
241. Arch. Gon. B. 1225, fol.104: "Non so se li facti seguiranno ale parole... zò che me disse (Bernardo de'Medici) foe di substantia, fu questo: ch parlando luy heri cum lambassadore Venetiano, pareo che poco se amasseno de pase: et alhora ge dissi, che ben si poteva vedere la loro pessima intentione, el se strense ne le spalle dicendo che io diceva vero...."
242. Arch. Gon. B. 1225, fol.105, 27 Nov.1440.
243. Ibid. ".... de la redentegrazione de la excel. vostra pare no se ne fece difficultade alcune."
244. Arch. Gon. B. 1225, fol.62.
245. Ibid., 66, 7 December 1440.
246. Arch. Gon. B. 1225, fol.64, 2 December 1440.
247. Ibid., 65, 5 December 1440: "Io, conoscendo che questo signore facilmente si voltato mo qua mo la, non stago senza dubia, andando la cossa in lungo, chel non sia mutato de opinione." On 29 December 1440 Zenebaldo gave an indication of the sort of arguments which were being used to persuade Sforza to favour Milan: "In questo partire de Simonio (Milanese ambassador) per andare a Vinexia al Signor Mess. lo Marchexe ha mandato a ricordare al Conte chel habia a mente la fine del Conte Carmignola, non perché'l creda che Veneciani glie metesseno le mani adosso pallipemente, ma chel se guardi la persona da veneno conoscendo quelli come sono facti." As far as Sforza's attitude to Bianca is concerned, the same letter is very clear: "non pare chel conte dexidera e brama alltro che Madonna Biancha." Arch. Gon. B. 1225, fol.132 (Zenebaldo to Gianfrancesco).
248. Arch. Gon. B. 1224, fol.136, 31 December 1440: "fra pochi e pochi di se vedrà gran parte de quello debia seguire o dela guera o dela pace". (Zenebaldo to Gianfrancesco).
249. Arch. Gon. B. 1225, fol.122, 5 Jan.1441.
250. For the background to this see C.M.Ady, The Bentiveoglio of Bologna (Oxford, 1937, repr.1969). pp.21-22. See also Treccani (Mi), pp.335ff. for the context of this campaign.
251. Arch. Gon. B. 1225, fol.122, 5 January 1441.
252. Ibid.
253. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 9 Jan.1441 (Ghillino's letters to Este.)
254. Ibid., 1225, fol.125, 14 Jan.1441: "... et maxime Peschiera perche Veneciani ne fano gran caxo...".

255. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol.112, 9 Feb.1441 (Corrado to Gianfrancesco):  
"pare che da la pace se mo sia fora de speranza." See also Blondi Flavi,  
"Quartae Decadis", bk. 2, in Studi e Testi, vol. xiviii p.3.
256. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol.112.
257. Ibid., 1225, fol.112, 8 Feb.1441: "Me replicò chel fasceva tuto  
quello posseva, concludendome chel non ha men cura de vuy, che de luy  
enstesso".
258. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol.112, 9 Feb.1441 (Corrado to Gianfrancesco):  
"... non foe mai ambizioso de stato, ma ben e stato ambizioso de amici...."
259. Da Soldo, p.51: "Tra ottobrio, novembrio, decembrio 1440 e zenaro 1441  
se miss in puncto molto bene e commenò a far la massa de sotto de Po e far  
grandiapparechiamenti per campezare non obstante che'l fusse de inverno.  
E ben se no poteva accorgere li Rectori e Proveditori de la Signoria; et  
anchora fideva avisati che i guardassi bene e che li fesseno venir tutte  
le gente de qua, avisandoli ch'el voleva fare uno assalto, pur non  
provedendoge, el ditto niccolò Picenino."
260. Treccani (mi) p.342.
261. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol.114, 14 Feb.1441 (Corrado to Gianfrancesco).
262. Ibid., pp.115-120. (Corrado's reports).
263. Ibid., fol.120.
264. Ibid., fol.121. Corrado congratulated Gianfrancesco on the capture of the  
bridge at Valleggio: "Considerata la importantia del dicto ponte...  
Et per dio. I. signore mio. se veniti a reaquistar alcuna de le vostre  
terre, che Dio ve ne presti gratia."
265. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol.124.
266. Ibid.
267. Arch. Gon. B. 1225, fol.115, 3 March 1441 (Calcagnini to Gianfrancesco)  
Uguccione del Abbadia was very frustrated: indeed with the Duke's  
untrustworthiness. Calcagnini reported him as saying: "come diavolo  
se porremmo fidare senza pigno del Duca de Milano....". See also  
Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol.126, 5 March (Corrado to Gianfrancesco). It  
was just a question of putting Cremona and Pontremoli in Sforza's hands.  
(cf.B.1225 fol.130, 7 March; Zenobaldo to Gianfrancesco).
268. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol.129. 7 March 1441.
269. Ibid.
270. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol.132. 10 March 1441.
271. Ibid., B.1607, fol.41, 10 March 1441 (Filippo Maria to Gianfrancesco)  
".... et simelemente ne seria caro assai che quando tale zizame sono  
seminate, che tuto procede da gente che non voriano el vostro bene,  
ne lo nostro, la vostra fraternità non ne pigliasse alcuna molestia ne  
affano ne la mente sua."

272. S.S. reg. 15, fol.80, 2 May 1441 (Instructions to Francesco Barbaro)  
He was the Venetian ambassador to Sforza at the time and in these instructions it was suggested that Gianfrancesco was not highly respected in Milan.
273. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol.134, 17 April 1441 (Corrado to Paola).
274. Osio, vol. iii, pt. 1, p.229, no.CCXIV. 27 Apr.1441.
275. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol.137, 18 May 1441.
276. S.S. reg.15, fols. 85,85t, 7 June 1441.
277. Arch. Gon. B. 1607, fol.42, 8 June 1441 (Filippo Maria to Gianfrancesco):  
"E de la cura ha pigliata de mandar Zanebaldo a Ferrara per aconzo de le cossi presso a lo Illustre et Excelso Signore messer lo Marchese de Ferrara." On 11 June Zenebaldo had returned but without much hope of having achieved anything of note (Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 11/12 June, Gianfrancesco to Corrado).
278. Ibid. "Ne may per alcuno tempo habiamo dicto non etiendo pensato quelle cosse le quale par, ne siano state date ad intendere... Ne anchora.... ve habiamo portato ne portiamo odio ranchoe o malivolentia. E sel ve piacerà de havere bona informatione trovareti che quelli se sono inziagnati de persuadere el contrario sono bosadri e vostri e nostri inimici."
279. Arch. Gon. B.1607, fol.140; 2 May (Corrado to Gianfrancesco).
280. Ibid. fol.42: "Quanto al facto del reaquistare Axola e Castellozofredo; siamo contentissimi che a questo se attenda. E gia deve essere venuto verso quelle parte, per questo el magnanimo nostro Capitaneo. E qualunqua utilità e commodità ve seguirà per tale acquisto reputaremo essere nostra propria. E se pure accadesse non se acquistasseno di dicti lochi, seremo contenti de provedere de soldi per tante altre de le vostre gente da cavalli e da pé, ultra la conducta le lancie cinque cento e fanti cinquecento, quante bastarano ala difesa, e segurezza del stato vostro, o mediante altre gente de le nostre provederemo ala dicta difensione, e segurezza, come sarà de bisogno."
281. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 8 June (copy in the chancery minutes). This document does not specify Asola or Castelgoffredo but is a general undertaking to protect the Mantovano. The original is in Arch. Gon. B. 43, fol.274.
282. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 11 June (Instructions to Corrado).
283. Da Soldo, p.54: "E li se fece uno bello fatto d'armi per modo che quelli de la Signoria have grande danno per andar a tor desavantagio, se che'l ne fu morti de quelli de la Signoria più de 500 persone..."
284. Ibid., p.55.
285. Ibid., p.55.
286. Ibid., p.55. "Al dì primo Augusto, a hora una de notte, el Conte Francesco fece fare una crida, a pena de la forca, per alcun modo nissun non ardisse offendere li inimici. E fu fatto tregua e levate le offese per 8 zorno e 8 di contrabando. Et de subito fu dispiantado le bombarde e mandato ogni munitione a Bressa.



287. cf. Collinson Morley, op.cit., p.43: "He preferred defeat to letting one of his generals think himself powerful enough to dictate terms to him."
  288. Simonetta, p.107.
  289. Ibid., p.108. "Urbanus addidit, ni quamprimum pareret Philippi jussis, se mox reliquam exercitum adversus eum conversurum adderetque, si opus esset, venetam etiam phalangem. Quae quidem verba ita Picinini terruere animum, ut perlimitantes responderit, quod domino suo placuisset, sibi placeat necesse fare."
  290. Da Soldo, p.55. The touching terms in which the meeting was described is surely cynical.
  291. S.S. reg.15, fol.89, 12 July 1441. See also fol.88, 10 July in which similar material is relayed to Giovanni Marino, ambassador to Florence.
  292. S.S. reg. 15, fol.90.
  293. Ibid., 95, 24 Aug.1441.
  294. Ibid., 95t, 26 Aug.1441.
  295. Ibid., 99, 25 Sept.1441: "quod habeamus quicquid tenet Marchio Mantue de territoriis nostris Veronensem et Brixiensem et nos contenti sumus restituere et dare que tenemus de territorio Mantuano."
  296. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol.144, 11 Oct.1441.
  297. There is some disagreement over the date of the marriage. The actual contract bears the date 25 October. See Treccani (Mi. ) p.345, note 3 and Decembrio, op.cit., pp.228-9.
  298. Arch. Gon. B. 43, fols 275-281t, 20 Nov.1441 and Gianfrancesco's copy of Sforza's arbitration (fol. 277, article 2).
  299. Ibid., fol. 277t, Articles 4-8.
  300. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 14 April 1442 (Foscari to Sforza).
  301. Arch. Gon. B. 43, fol.277t, Article 9.
  302. Da Soldo, p.59.
-

CHAPTER 6

THE FINAL YEARS

(1442-1444)

CHAPTER 6THE FINAL YEARS (1442-1444)

The Peace of Cavriana effectively rang down the curtain on Gianfrancesco's military career even though it did very little to calm his fears in the long run. The last two years of his life add very little to the picture presented in the preceeding pages. In fact, the documentary material available is very sparse and even the chroniclers find little to say.

Ostensibly these were years of peace for Mantua, and for Lombardy in general; but they were disappointing and depressing ones for Gianfrancesco. They were also difficult years from a financial point of view. The Lombard Wars had left a legacy of debt which took a long time to recover from. Mantua's resources were low and in these years, as in the period of war, the problems of trying to get Filippo Maria to live up to his financial obligations were as great as ever. All this meant that it was imperative for Mantua to maintain a lower profile in the affairs of Lombardy, a policy which was facilitated by the fact that, on the surface at least, Mantua was at peace with Venice.

Although from one point of view the Peace gave no cause for rejoicing in Mantua, it nevertheless came as a great relief after six years of war. Like the other protagonists in the Lombard Wars, Mantua was suffering from war weariness; perhaps more so than others because it lacked the resources of its more powerful neighbours. <sup>1/</sup> Gianfrancesco's own health and vitality were by now undergoing a serious decline, as we shall see, and although he continued to govern up until his death, he merely concentrated on keeping the government on an even keel. As his strength

ebbed, he became more and more concerned about the difficult question of the division of his property and ensuring that there would be adequate protection for his state. Although the situation in 1444 was somewhat different from that of 1407, it was nevertheless still the case that a smooth transference of power was essential. Although Lucovico was eminently capable of taking over the reins of government, as far as other states were concerned, a new rule was always a time for reassessment, and the political atmosphere which had prevailed in Lombardy during Gianfrancesco's lifetime dictated that nothing could be left to chance.

As well as such personal preoccupations, there were other matters which concerned Gianfrancesco during this period. According to the chroniclers the period after Cavriana was one of famine. It is very difficult to assess the way in which the wars had affected the economy of the Mantovano, but it was certainly the case that Gianfrancesco did care very much about the economic welfare of his people. Gasco's studies for 1430 demonstrated this very clearly. <sup>2/</sup> In 1442 and 1443 there were a succession of bad harvests, partly the result of uncharacteristically severe weather which many writers commented upon. <sup>3/</sup> The problems which this caused are alluded to in some documentary material. The shortages were worse in 1443, apparently the winter was exceptionally hard, the worst in living memory; and there are a number of references to Gianfrancesco's efforts to get supplies of grain from elsewhere in the 'Gridario' entries for this period. <sup>4/</sup> The need was such that anyone bringing in supplies from outside was to be exempt from paying the usual import duties. <sup>5/</sup> In November 1442 Matteo de Corrado was given the task of trying to get urgent supplies from the Milanese: "... ma una cosa ge volea ricordare che in mantuana non era da manzar como im questi di.... ge havea facto dire per le doe parti del tempo per fino aricolto, ne ancho sapea dove sene potesse haver, e circa de ciò ne fessemo pur alcuna

discussione, tandem me dissi chel sperava non mancharia per questo..." <sup>6/</sup>  
 Lombardy as a whole, however, seems to have suffered considerably at this time and it is doubtful that the Duke could have done much personally to alleviate the problem. As usual it was the poorest people who suffered the most and, in order to help the neediest, Gianfrancesco is reputed to have undertaken a number of what we would refer to today as job-creation schemes, such as the building of the Church of the Carmine and the arches around Piazza Erbe, which are still in existence. <sup>7/</sup>

Peace, therefore, was not only welcome, but necessary. However, it could be argued that the problems of peace were as difficult as those of war, and it is important to consider how Mantua stood with Venice and Milan at the end of Gianfrancesco's life.

Cavriana may have brought an interlude of peace to Lombardy, but there was no real reason to believe that it would be any more permanent than the two treaties of Ferrara which had preceded it. The suspicions still remained and although Gianfrancesco was at peace with Venice, it was a very uneasy one. Any attempts to normalise relations between Mantua and Venice would, of necessity, be coloured by the way in which the Senate had behaved in the peace negotiations. Close though he had been to his former tutor for the better part of his life, the last stage of the war had created a gulf between them which was almost impossible to bridge for the rest of Gianfrancesco's lifetime.

There was not very much contact between Gianfrancesco and Venice in the remaining years and what little there was, if not openly hostile, was not particularly friendly. As we have seen, Gianfrancesco was still haggling with Venice over the provisions of the peace as late as June 1442. <sup>8/</sup>

Even as late as 27 December 1442 Francesco Sforza was complaining that the fortress of San Michele had not been surrendered to him by Gianfrancesco. <sup>9/</sup> All this was indicative of the strained relations between Mantua and Venice throughout this period.

Matters were not eased by Mantuan interference in the Veronese at the beginning of 1443. The background to this is not at all clear because the documentation is poor. There are some rather enigmatic references to an 'impresa' in the correspondence between Gianfrancesco and Corrado in the previous November. <sup>10/</sup> It is difficult to judge how much responsibility Filippo Maria must bear in encouraging such an enterprise, but on the surface it seems to have been rather a fruitless affair and did nothing to ease the general situation. On 13 February 1443 Triadano Gritti and Francesco Barbaro were sent by the Senate to negotiate with Gianfrancesco over these incursions "quod multum inferret territorio nostro Veronen. damnum". <sup>11/</sup> According to official instructions issued to Barbaro three days later there had been talk of Gianfrancesco planning to divert the Mincio thereby causing damage to the Veronese. <sup>12/</sup> He was instructed to use the most forceful means at his disposal to dissuade Gianfrancesco from carrying out such a scheme; if necessary he was to threaten the use of force should Gianfrancesco so flagrantly ignore the terms of the peace. Judging from the fact that there is no more discussion of his matter in any of the official sources, it can only be concluded that the Venetian ambassadors were successful.

Throughout the latter stages of the war Gianfrancesco had become obsessed with the safety and security of his boundaries with the Veronese and his apprehensions seemed, if anything, to increase during peacetime. The situation which existed was very much akin to the tensions experienced

during 1433-6 and this may partly explain Gianfrancesco's actions although it cannot completely justify them. His sensitivity about this area is shown repeatedly in his correspondence with Milan as we shall see in due course.

This tension between Venice and Gianfrancesco affected Ludovico and Carlo as well and shows perhaps more clearly than ever that the peace had essentially changed nothing. At the end of December 1442 Carlo's secretary had been sent to Venice offering his master's services. To this offer the Senate replied politely, but firmly, that although Carlo could be assured of the Senate's best wishes, it would not be right to accept his services because of his father's attachment to Milan. They were, however, prepared to mediate on his behalf with Florence if he so wished. <sup>13/</sup> In fact, Carlo was to remain closely attached to Milan after having been jilted in this fashion, and subsequently saw service with the Pope.

The Mantua interference in the Veronese also meant that the Venetians would have little to do with Ludovico in his father's lifetime. In July 1443 he had sent letters to the Senate offering his friendship and fidelity. It may well be that Ludovico was paving the way for better relations with Venice when he should succeed to the Marquisate. It is certainly the case that when he did actually succeed his father he did tend to play the role of mediator between Venice and Milan rather more. On this occasion, however, the Senate's attitude was the same as in the previous December; "non obstantibus aliquibus occurrentibus, semper m. suam dileximus et diligimus et commodum et bonum suum exoptabamus." Nevertheless, because of the "suspicionibus nunc vigentibus" between his father and the Senate, they could not consider the possibility of his entering their service. <sup>14/</sup>

Just what part Gianfrancesco played in these approaches to Venice is uncertain. He may have encouraged this action, but if so, whatever benefits he may have hoped to gain were not forthcoming in his lifetime. The Senate continued to maintain a very reserved attitude towards Gianfrancesco until his death.

Likewise the relationship between Mantua and Milan remained essentially unchanged. Despite the way in which Filippo Maria had let Gianfrancesco down repeatedly during their association, Mantua remained tied to Milan for the rest of Gianfrancesco's life and beyond. The problems which had characterised the relationship still existed. Although Gianfrancesco had no reason to trust the Duke any more than before, he still depended on Milan for protection.

For his part, the Duke wanted to keep Gianfrancesco friendly to him more than ever. Although technically Sforza was now part of the Visconti family after his marriage to Bianca, there was little love lost between father and son-in-law. Moreover, Filippo Maria's territorial ambitions had not been extinguished by Cavriana and there was no doubt in his mind about the war with Venice being taken up again when he felt himself strong enough to do so. He realised, however, that because of the nature of the Cavriana settlement, he would have to be the aggressor, and this was basically why the friendship of Mantua was so important to him.

It was these motives which dictated the nature of the renewal of his agreement with Gianfrancesco after the peace. Even after the peace had been published Gianfrancesco had continued to voice his fears to Filippo Maria about the security of Mantua and his fears that Florence and Venice might



renew the war. On 20 August 1442 the Duke wrote him a long letter in which he tried to reassure Gianfrancesco that there was no immediate prospect of the Venetians renewing the war for the time being. <sup>15/</sup> Nevertheless, he understood his fears and his prudent attitude towards defence and assured him that he would soon be in a much better position to protect Mantuan interests than ever before. For instance, he refers to the refurbishing of the twelve galleys which would be despatched to him with all speed. <sup>16/</sup> The letter ends in the following optimistic fashion: "E dio sa la bona dispositione nostra in questa verso de vuy, se la possanza nostra respondesse a la voluntade. E se per lo passato è seguito alcuno manchamento, sia chiara e certa la fraternitade vostra, non è accaduto per non voler, anzi per non potere, ma cum la gratia de Dio, se reformarano le cosse nostre in meglio al che se attende cum ogni diligentia. E reformate che siano, poremo far quello non possiamo adesso." <sup>17/</sup>

The tone of the letter was very familiar and although it seemed to calm Gianfrancesco's immediate fears, his basic apprehensions still remained. These were shown very clearly in his reply to this letter which was despatched to Milan on 27 August. Gianfrancesco realised that Filippo Maria was likely to be better informed about the intentions of Venice and Florence than he. Nevertheless, it was difficult to dispel from his mind the fears he had about the dangers facing Mantua: "Non resta chio non veda il stato mio in continuo imminente periculo, perché siando li inimici mei possenti, non gli manca altro cha la voluntade, che sempre la desfactione mia, e in suo arbitrio, trovandomi in li termini chio son". <sup>18/</sup> This was why he felt it necessary to have his eastern borders well protected by an army, and that the fortresses along this border should be strengthened even in peacetime. Gianfrancesco hoped that Filippo Maria would be able to finance this. <sup>19/</sup>

In effect, we see the same old problems arising *vis-a-vis* Milan. In the following January Gianfrancesco was still complaining of insufficient money and protection and on this occasion he was especially worried about Milanese intervention to the south in Bologna, Assisi and Naples, because he felt that Mantua would be left without protection and exposed to attacks from the enemy. <sup>20/</sup> He clearly felt his eastern boundaries to be severely under-protected; quite different from the strength of the Adda boundary for Milan. In his letter to Corrado he instructed him to paint a sorry picture of Mantua's weakness: "Vedendome essere poveri, denudati de quello che havevemo inanci la guerra passata si de forteze e de munitione come de ogni altro bene che allora trovavemo havere e non ci resta altro che la persona inferma e una povera citade laqual perdendo porremmo dire de andare al hospedale..." <sup>21/</sup> Gianfrancesco begged Filippo Maria to consider well before making any move which might have disastrous consequences for Mantua; and he also continued his request for not only the payments which were still owing to him, but also for the regular peacetime monthly payment of 1,000 ducats which had been part of the agreement. This was more immediately important than the territorial part of their agreement, which was largely the same as that of 1438 although at the beginning of February Brescia was substituted for Verona. <sup>22/</sup> After the experiences of Filippo Maria's previous promises it was difficult to regard them very seriously; at best they were merely hypothetical. In fact, on 20 January there was even a suggestion from the Duke, via Corrado, that if in the event of war Gianfrancesco were to lose Mantua, he was quite prepared to give him either Novara, Alessandria or Piacenza. <sup>23/</sup> This ludicrous scheme shows to what lengths Filippo Maria was prepared to go and ignored the fact that Mantua was more than a piece of merchandise to Gianfrancesco which could be exchanged at will. In the same report, however, Filippo

Maria promised to make regular monthly payments to Gianfrancesco.

"e così provvederà senza fallo, o pace o guerra che segua." Similar promises were made to Ludovico when he succeeded his father,<sup>24/</sup> and he experienced the same difficulties in trying to extract the money so 'reliably' promised. The familiar story of empty promises was repeating itself.<sup>25/</sup> As far as Mantua's standing with Milan was concerned at the end of Gianfrancesco's lifetime the same promises and suspicions subsist. While there are promises of help, it still remained to be seen whether they would be translated into action and this was to be one of the most crucial problems which Gianfrancesco was to bequeath to his successor.

Throughout 1442 Gianfrancesco had been in indifferent health but by the winter of that year it seemed to take a definite turn for the worse. The pressures he had had to face during the preceeding years had certainly taken their toll. As early as the beginning of March 1443 concern was being expressed at the fact that his strength appeared to be on the wane,<sup>26/</sup> so much so that he was unable to receive the Milanese envoy. The 'copialettere' in the Gonzaga Archive give a full account of the ups and downs of Gianfrancesco's illness which was not merely 'gotta' but a steadily worsening stomach condition. Even Gianfrancesco himself in a letter of 8 March describes it to Carlo as a 'gravissimo male',<sup>27/</sup> and although there appeared to be periods of remission, it seemed to get gradually more debilitating. By the end of July it was so bad that he planned to attend the baths at Petriolo in the Cremonese,<sup>28/</sup> but he was too ill to go throughout the summer. By October his illness was beginning to interfere with the administration,<sup>29/</sup> and the illness appeared to have spread to his chest as well.

It would be tedious to document this illness in full. By the beginning of 1444 he had recovered somewhat, but by August the stomach disease took a final hold and from now on there seemed to be very little that could be done to alleviate the great pain which he was suffering from. Gianfrancesco himself explained his symptoms to the doctors in the following terms: "nos autem ut de statu nostro inteligatis ex hac stomachi passione vehementer et assidue vexamur et male nos habemus." <sup>30/</sup>

At Este's invitation Gianfrancesco, by now seriously ill, decided to leave Mantua "per trasferire ad un loco dove ne hera affermato esser uno zentile e bon aero per veder se cum questa mutatione del aere possesemo relevare dela nostra longa infermetade". <sup>31/</sup> The visit lasted barely five days. He returned to Mantua on 8 September a dying man. Although his condition appeared to stabilise; on 20 September, "contra el parer de medici", he had a relapse. The doctors had considered "che la virtù vitale e costante e forte", <sup>32/</sup> but now he was giving up the fight to survive. By 21 Paola realised that the end was near. She was informing her sons "che sia più tosto pezorato che migliorato". <sup>33/</sup> Two days later he made his will.

Chroniclers are not in agreement over the actual date of Gianfrancesco's death. For instance Equicola states the 23 September, <sup>34/</sup> the same day as the will, whereas Platina cites the 25th. <sup>35/</sup> Judging from the 'copialettere' it is most reasonable to suppose the latter date to be nearer the truth. There is an entry for the 25 September in which Luca da Perugia, a doctor sent by the Este to attend upon Gianfrancesco, was sent for as quickly as possible because Gianfrancesco's life was in danger. <sup>36/</sup> After that there is no further mention of his illness, but on 6 October there is a reply to a letter of condolence which had been

sent by the castellan of the 'rocca' at Ostiglia. <sup>37/</sup> His death must have occurred on the 25th September or very soon afterwards. <sup>38/</sup> He was 49 years old.

According to the provisions of his will, Gianfrancesco wanted his funeral to be a very simple affair. It was his wish to be buried in the same church as his father, San Francesco, at night, with not more than twenty persons present. Moreover, his body was to be completely unadorned and dressed in a plain woollen garment. A sum of money was to be set aside for a hundred of the poorest people in Mantua to be fed and clothed on the thirtieth day after his death. <sup>39/</sup>

There were a number of monetary bequests to Mantuan churches and monasteries, provision for the payment of outstanding debts, and his executors were required to settle territorial differences between the Gonzaga and Cavalcabò over Viadana, Dossolo and Riparolo. However, the most important part of the will concerns the way in which his territories were divided up among his sons because it does reveal quite a lot about Gianfrancesco's attitude to the security of the Mantovano.

Gianfrancesco regarded his state as his own private property to be apportioned as he saw fit, and in his will he divided the Mantovano up into four distinct parcels of land. As the eldest son Ludovico was to have the title of Marquis together with Mantua, Borgoforte and its surrounding area and all the territories on the eastern boundaries with the Veronese. Carlo was to have all the lands which Gianfrancesco held at that time in the Cremonese, especially Luzzara, Suzzara, Gonzaga, Serravalle and Reggiolo, with the exception of Pontoglio and Canadolo. These

were the largest bequests. His two younger sons got much less. Gianlucido, who seemed to have a promising ecclesiastical career ahead of him, got Volta, Cavriana, Rodigo, Ceresario and S.Martino Gusnago, while Alessandro was to receive Canneto and the lands which Gianfrancesco possessed in the Bresciano at the time of his death. Provisions were also made in the event of any of the sons dying without a surviving heir. In the event of Carlo dying without issue, his territories were to be divided into two: the Cremonese lands would go to the younger brothers while the lands to the south of the Po were to go to Ludovico. Gianlucido's lands were all to go to Ludovico while Alessandro's territories were to be divided equally between Carlo and Gianlucido or the surviving brother.

It is arguable that such a division of property would be seen by other states as a weakness at a time when it seemed imperative that the Mantovano should have the strength of unity, but this is not the way Gianfrancesco saw it. He may have recalled the inter-family problems which faced the sons of Luigi in the 1360's <sup>40/</sup> and he explicitly stated in his will that unity would result only if each son had his own separate domain. In particular, the relationship between the two eldest sons was not close and Gianfrancesco felt that land held in common would only exacerbate their differences. As it turned out, Ludovico was to have his fair share of trouble with Carlo anyhow.

However, in the circumstances, any division of a state (as opposed to a private estate) presents immeasurable problems, not the least of which was Ludovico's overall authority as ruler. Gianfrancesco tried to provide for this by stating that all his younger sons were to hold their lands as fiefs from Ludovico, but in the final analysis this could provide no

guarantee of unity even though it was explicitly stated that any of his sons would forfeit his inheritance if he were to plot against any of his brothers. <sup>41/</sup>

The theory behind the division of lands was sound enough; that the two most important bequests should give the eldest sons a powerful interest in protecting their respective territories against possible threats from Venice and Milan. Although Ludovico had been preparing the way for a more peaceful and harmonious relationship with Venice even before Gianfrancesco's death, the fact that he was awarded those territories which on the latter part of Gianfrancesco's own lifetime had been most gravely threatened clearly showed from which direction Gianfrancesco believed the long-term danger to come. <sup>42/</sup> This was a fear later shared by many other states.

Carlo's lands bordered on the Milanese and were very substantial indeed. They also included the oldest Gonzaga possessions. Even after Ludovico's reconciliation with his father Carlo still remained Gianfrancesco's favourite son and it was clearly the case that the security of this area was best left in Carlo's hands. After all, Carlo had been and was to remain more loyal to Filippo Maria than Ludovico. His engagement with Milan had been renewed in 1442, <sup>43/</sup> and although he was granted a condotta from the Pope two years later, it was largely through his father's requests that he returned to Visconti service, although for the time being the Duke was not able to offer him any immediate active engagements. <sup>44/</sup>

This did not only give him a motive for the safety of his territories, it also provided him with a base from which he could give

his brother trouble. Neither Gianlucido nor Alessandro gave Ludovico any problems. When Gianlucido died in February 1448 his territories reverted to Ludovico and Alessandro lived obscurely until his own death in 1466.

In fact, Ludovico managed to outlive all his brothers and consequently ended up by ruling the whole of Mantovano in his own right. The rivalry between Carlo and Ludovico has been well documented elsewhere, but their rivalry was definitely over by 1452 when his inheritance was declared forfeit to Ludovico. <sup>45/</sup> There was, consequently, an element of good fortune involved in averting the shortcomings of Gianfrancesco's will, but it illustrates well the extreme difficulties confronting the ailing Gianfrancesco in 1444 and also shows that degree of ambivalence which by now had become an essential element in Gonzaga policy.

---

What, then *had* Gianfrancesco achieved both for himself and for his state in the political and military affairs of Lombardy? Can we really dismiss him as "mediocre ma non sgradevole" ?

In the history of Mantua, and indeed of northern Italy as a whole, Gianfrancesco Gonzaga's role has been underestimated for far too long. His career may not have the attractiveness of a Ludovico Gonzaga or an Isabella d'Este but, in view of the political and military role which he played in Lombardy, the scant attention he has been paid by historians is most unjustified. Although Platina eulogised him as "vir magnitudine animi, clementia, gratia, liberalitate, magnificentia, humanitate, cum quovis optimo Principe conferendus", <sup>46/</sup> the accusation of faithlessness still attaches to him and it seems to have erected a barrier to a fuller



510.

understanding of the man and of his policies, and has thereby prevented the opportunity of studying not merely the relationship between smaller and larger states in a formative period of development, but, more significantly, the problems and pressures confronting states like Mantua at a time of political crisis.

The diplomatic legacy of the tre-cento had been the art of political survival and the fact that Mantua existed in 1444 when many other similar states had disappeared shows how well Gianfrancesco had mastered it. The reason for this is that Gianfrancesco was able to manoeuvre himself through the tortuous jungle of early quattrocento politics by capitalising upon the advantages which Mantuan friendship could bring, and in the final analysis one of the most striking illustrations of the central position which Mantua occupied, physically and diplomatically, is that expanding dynamic states like Venice and Milan felt that there was a need for its continued existence not only as a buffer against expansion, but also as the front line in a policy of expansion. Gianfrancesco's rule illustrates both the advantages and disadvantages of this position and the way in which he emerged virtually unscathed from such a mighty clash is itself sufficient to stamp his career as significant.

It is important in another respect. As well as being the ruler of a state Gianfrancesco was also a condottiere and we have seen that a combination of the two roles can lead to complex problems. There were positive advantages for Gianfrancesco in using his military experience to bolster up the usefulness of his state but it also led to a number of very difficult dilemmas. The dual role worked well when the interests of employer and state coincided, but the progress of the Lombard Wars showed

that this was not always the case. However, on every occasion it was the interests of state which claimed the first priority, but even in 1438 there was no question of Gianfrancesco breaking his agreement with Venice. In fact, Gianfrancesco must go down as one of the most moral condottieri of his age.

It cannot be said that the problems which confronted Gianfrancesco were of his own making. In a very real sense both he and Mantua were slaves of circumstances beyond his control. He was forced to accept a command from Venice which he felt would ultimately conflict with his duty to Mantua, and in 1438 he was forced to throw in his lot with a man so complex and unpredictable who later proved almost totally unreliable precisely because the balance of forces in Lombardy provided him with no viable alternative. A study of Gianfrancesco's career is valuable not only because it presents us with the complexities of the dual role of ruler and soldier of fortune, but it provides us with well documented accounts of his relationships with two very different masters - the Venetian Senate and Filippo Maria Visconti. In particular, his relationship with Carmagnola in the first instance and subsequently with the Senate itself as military commander provides us with a fascinating insight into the mechanics behind Venice's expansionist policies in the early fifteenth century. Indeed, it may well have been this dual role which prevented Mantua from becoming completely submerged.

Mantua, then, was very much at the centre of Lombard affairs during this period. But Gianfrancesco was very much responsible for raising the prestige of his state in other ways. The Imperial title brought added dignity to Mantua even if it brought nothing in terms of

power. It also brought the prestige of a fine marriage for Ludovico.

In fact Gianfrancesco used marriage very wisely to bolster up his family's position. The Brandenburg marriage may have helped to raise the standing of the Gonzaga in Lombardy as princes of the Empire, but the close relationship with the Este of Ferrara had also been most advantageous. Not only were the Estensi well established and highly respected, but the diplomatic influence which Niccolò wielded was very useful to Gianfrancesco, certainly as far as peace negotiations were concerned. The only significant failure in this respect was the breakdown of negotiations to marry his younger daughter Cecilia to Oddantonio da Montefeltro, Guidantonio's son and heir to the duchy of Urbino, largely because Cecilia wanted to take the veil. Like the Marchesa, Cecilia was a highly educated and pious young woman and, evidently, very determined to have her own way, much to the anger of her father. <sup>47/</sup>

During Lucovico's rule Mantua became important as a cultural centre but the basis for this was laid by Gianfrancesco, due largely to the engagement of Vittorino da Feltre to educate his children. Although a consideration of the cultural aspects of his rule lies outside the bounds of this study, the fact that Vittorino's activities not only resulted in Gianfrancesco's own children being highly educated, in itself auspicious for Mantua's own cultural future, but also drew other people from outside. Not only were some prominent Mantuans like Francesco Calcagnini educated at the 'Casa Giocosa', but also Federigo da Montefeltro, Cosimo de' Migliorati, Antonio Beccaria, Francesco da Castiglione, Lorenzo Valla and Giovanni Aretino, to name but a few. <sup>48/</sup> In a very real sense, Gianfrancesco's invitation to Vittorino caused Mantua to nurture some of the finest minds of the time, and this was to have political as well as cultural results.

So was the establishment of the Studium Publicum in 1433 under the patronage of Sigismund. <sup>49/</sup> It is very likely that all this was under the more direct supervision of Paola, who had played such an important role in helping her husband through many difficult times. Although Ludovico was expressly charged by the will to take care of his mother and assign a portion of the Castello di San Giorgio for her personal use, she, like her daughter, chose to spend her last years in the Convent of Corpus Domini, which she herself had founded. They both took the veil shortly after Gianfrancesco's death and remained there until they died. <sup>50/</sup>

All in all, then, Gianfrancesco's achievement was considerable. There was no doubting the fact that Gonzaga rule in Mantua was stronger than ever in 1444. The boy of twelve who had so unexpectedly succeeded his father as the fifth "Capitano" of Mantua in 1407 had more than fulfilled the hopes which Donato de' Preti had voiced so long ago. Ludovico, the second Marquis, however, could not merely rest his security upon his father's achievement. Not only was he to continue in his efforts to regain those territories which had been lost at Cavriana <sup>51/</sup> as well as the lands which he had been promised by the Visconti, but he realised that he would have to continue the vigilant task of weighing up the relative strengths and weaknesses of his powerful neighbours. Although he could try to improve upon his father's performance, the methods he was to use were basically the same. It was inevitable that in the near future his talents would be tested when the death of the ageing Visconti would once again unleash the dogs of war on Lombardy. There were many who hoped that history might repeat itself; that as in 1402 there would be rich pickings for those who were daring enough. Ludovico, unfortunately, could rest assured that in Mantua's case, history *would* repeat itself in so far as it would remain very much at the centre of the struggle.

"Quinta tenet primus regni loca Marchio Janis Franciscus, vir fama ingens, ingentior actis". <sup>52/</sup> This epigram which Amadei, a dedicated historian of Mantua, quotes in his "Cronaca Universale", goes to the heart of Gianfrancesco's place in the history of his state. It is essentially as a man of action that he must finally be judged. In the light of the way in which he faced the supreme threats to the Mantovano, and of the spirit and motives which governed his policies, Ludovico could have every reason to be proud of his father's actions; and it is hoped that this study of them has gone some way towards giving Gianfrancesco Gonzaga the credit which has so long evaded him.

CHAPTER 6THE FINAL YEARS (1442-1444)Notes

1. See Volta, Compendio della Storia di Mantova, op.cit.,bk.7, p.118.
2. M. Gasco, "Pareri dati al Marchese Gian Francesco Gonzaga nel 1430 circa la ricostruzione economica dello stato", R.S.I., ser.IV, 5, III, 1934, pp.331-357.
3. Amadei, Cronaca Universale, op.cit, p.35; Volta, p.118. Amadei found the following inscription next to the piazzola of the church of the Padrini Teatrini of S.Maurizio: "Du di 17 al 26 de zenaro 1443 se pasò po suxo la giaza a pé, a cavolo e com tuto li carri careghi a Borgoforte et in multi altri loghi, e questo pozo fu fato a di e anti sopradito." (p.35.)
4. Arch. Gon. B. 2038/9, fasc. 4. e.g. 4 September 1443, which alludes to the very severe shortage of food.
5. Ibid., 13 Feb.1443. A 'grido' for 10 Jan.1444 applies especially to wine. B.2185, 21 April 1442 there is talk of "extrema necessitate di victualia e fame..."
6. Arch. Gon. B. 1620, fol.149, 11<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1442 (Corrado to Gianfrancesco).
7. Volta, pp.117-8.
8. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 14 Apr.1442; B.1419, fol.67, 26 June 1442.
9. Arch.Gon. B.1620, fol.151, 27 December 1442.
10. Arch Gon. B.1620, fol.149, 11 Nov. 1442.
11. S.S. reg.15, fol.159, 13 Feb.1443.
12. Ibid, 159t, 16 Feb.1443 (Instructions to Barbaro).
13. Ibid., 152t, 23 Dec.1442.
14. Ibid., 27t, 26 July 1443.
15. Arch.Gon.B.2185, 20 Aug.1442 (Filippo Maria to Gianfrancesco): "Ben ve advisamo che da poi siamo nuy chiariti e certificati che Venetiani e Fiorentini non hanno puncto intentione de movere nova guerra."
16. Ibid: "nuy havere non mancho cura de le cosse vostre che le nostra. E perché haveti tochata una parte de reparar e tener apparecchiati dodeci galeoni.... e vero che per alcune altre necessitate.... non se porà cussi presto proveder a la spesa bisogna per li dicti galeoni, pur se gli provederà cum ogni possibile celeritade..."
17. Ibid.
18. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 27 August 1442 (Gianfrancesco to Filippo Maria).

19. Ibid. "... di fanti e cavalli che tengo per guardare e defensione del stato mio, che bisognaria fosseno tenuti pagati, e di fortificare alcuni luoghi, in questa lettera non si fa alcuna conclusione, e pur seria necessario provederli...."
20. Arch. Gon. B. 2185, 7 Jan.1443 (Instructions to Corrado).
21. Ibid.
22. Arch.Gon. B. 2185, 4 Feb.1443; Filippo Maria's replies to Cattabene's embassy: "Regratia .... el prefato s. marchese dela sua liberate risposta circha el contracambio de Verona in Bressa ce retave contentissimo cum quella reservatione dele terre Veronese chesso s. marchese teneva quando da prima fu dacordo cum la s. sua...."
23. Arch. Gon. B.2185, 20 Jan.1443; Filippo Maria's replies to Corrado's embassy: "Praeterea, quando disgratia accoresse, che Dio per sua bontade non voglia, che per guerra se facesse, el prefato Signor Marchese perdesse Mantua... serà contento el prefato nostro I.S. in cambio de Mantua dargli una di queste tre cita, quale piu gli piace, zoé Novara, Alexandria o Piazenza".
24. See Storia di Mantova, ed. Coniglio , op.cit.,vol.2,p.5.
25. In the chancery minutes (Arch.Gon.B.2185) for 21 July 1443, there are copies of letters which tend to illustrate how Filippo Maria's actions discredited Mantua. There is a copy of a letter which the Duke sent to the Anziani of Bologna implicating Mantua in plans to form a league with him and together with this there is a copy of a letter by an unnamed person from Florence which illustrated how much discredit this revelation had caused Gianfrancesco in Venice and Florence.
26. Arch.Gon.B.2882 (copialettere), fasc.6, no.87.
27. Ibid 94, 8 March 1443.
28. Ibid 323, 20 July 1443.
29. Ibid. 497, 2 October,1443.
30. Ibid. 843, 27 Aug.1444.
31. Ibid., 878, 3 September 1444. Este later sent his own doctor Maestro Luca da Perugia to attend to him (no.890, 14 Sept.1444).
32. Ibid., no.898, 20 Sept.1444 (To Ludovico and Carlo).
33. Ibid., no.901.
34. Equicola, p.241, see also Amadei, p.35.
35. Platina, p.387, "Mantuanus Princeps anno quadragesimo quarto supra quadringentesimum et millesimum, septimo Kalendos Octobris, dolore stomachi moritur. Valetudinis causa cum balnea peteret, ingravescente in itinere morbo, in patriam rediens, non ita diu vixit". Mazzoldi states 24 September (Mantova - La Storia, vol.2, p.46.)

36. Arch. Gon. B. 2882, fasc. 7, no. 904, 25 Sept.1444: ".... la voglia instar e dar opera chel decto magistro Luca cum quanta più presteza sia posibele venga qui da noi che veramente per una cossa non sapiamo qual altra al presente più desideriamo."
37. Arch. Gon. B. 2882, fasc. 8, no.3.
38. Sanuto (col.1116) states that Gianfrancesco died on 8 September and that on 24 September Ludovico had written to the Senate informing them of his father's death.
39. Arch. Gon. B. 330 (wills), 23 September 1444. The witnesses to the will were Umberto de Strozzi, Giovanni de Crema, Rolando Suardo, Arrivabene de Bornadrisis, Matteo de Tosbecis, Giovanni Marco de Radiano and Francesco Calcagnini. Gianfrancesco was buried in S.Francesco, in the present chapel of San Bernardino. The church had been extensively renovated and rebuilt and the author was unable to find any indication of the burial place.
40. See above chapter 1, p.28.
41. Arch. Gon. B. 330 : ".... si marchinaretur seu perpertraret contra vitam ul. persona alterius...."
42. cf. Mahnke, who provides an excellent discussion of Gianfrancesco's will and its implications; p.45. "In the wills of 1444 and 1478 the fact that the Marchese commanded the full extent of Mantua's eastern frontier suggests that Gonzaga regarded Venice as posing the greatest threat to the survival of their state."
43. Atti Cancelereschi, op.cit., vol. 2, p.169; Osio, vol.3, pt.1, pp.246-7.
44. A.S.M. Archivio Ducale, Carteggio Visconteo. Extra Dominium, cart.14, fols. 74 (22 May 1444) and 80 (27 July 1444). Carlo's next Viscontean condotta was issued in March 1445 and renewed 2 years later. See Atti Canc. cit. vol. 2, pp.115-5 and 170.
45. See Mahnke, pp.128-131, 151-153. Carlo had offered his lands to Ludovico as guarantees of good behaviour when the latter arranged his release from confinement in Milan in March 1451. In 1452 Carlo entered service with Venice, Sforza's enemy.
46. Platina, p.387.
47. There is a fascinating study of the correspondence behind the projected marriage by F.Tarducci, Cecilia Gonzaga e Oddantonio da Montefeltro (Mantova - Mondovi 1897).
48. C. Rosmini, Idea del Ottimo Percettore nella vita e disciplina di Vittorino da Feltre. (Milan 1845). For a fuller list of books see Bibliography.
49. Davari, Notizie intorno allo Studio Pubblico..., op.cit.
50. Paola died on 27 March 1449 and Cecilia died in 1451. See Tarducci, Cecilia Gonzaga..., op.cit., p.45, especially notes 2, 3 & 4.
51. See Mahnke, p.41. These territories appeared regularly in the alliances and condotte of Ludovico's rule.
52. Amadei, op.cit., vol.2, p.47.



# SOURCES

## 1. MANTUA, ARCHIVIO DI STATO. ARCHIVIO GONZAGA

Buste nos. 2, 5, 33, 37, 43, 51, 85 fasc. 14, 196, 197, 215, 238, 330, 335, 389, 416, 428, 1080, 1081, 1225, 1228, 1418, 1419, 1595, 1607, 1620, 2003, 2038 fasc. 3 & 4, 2094, 2185, 2882, 3350, 2452.

Lib. Decr. vols. 1 & 2.

• Libro della Massaria.

Lib. Privileg. Com. Mant. vol. 2.

Carlo D'Arco Collection of Documents.

Box nos. 3, 96.

## 2. VENICE, ARCHIVIO DI STATO

Senato Misti, vol.48.

Senatus Secreta, registers no. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15.

Lettere Segrete del Collegio, vol. IV.

## 3. MILAN, ARCHIVIO DI STATO

Archivio Ducale, Carteggio Visconteo, Extra Dominium, cart. nos. 13 & 14.

Archivio Ducale, Registro Ducale, no.30 (M als Bb - Lorenzo Martignoni).

Archivio Ducale, Registro Ducale, no.41 (Rr als O - Giovanni Francesco Gallina).

---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### 1. UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPT CHRONICLES

Cronaca di Mantova d'anonimo autore dall' origini al 1485 (Mantua - Biblioteca Comunale, no.1022).

Cronaca Savina, (Biblioteca Marciana cod.135 cl.vii)

Cronaca Veneta, (Braidense)

Daino, G., De origine et genealogia illustrissime Domus dominorum de Gonzaga (Arch. Gon. B.416).

Fioretta, P., Vita dei Primi 13 Gonzaga che tennero dominio in Mantova (Mantua, Archivio di Stato, D'Arco collection no.96).

Florentinus P., In Historia Mantuana Gonzagumque Familia libri iii (Mantua, - Biblioteca Comunale, no.121 (A.IV.27)).

Mangini, L., Storia di Asola (Queriniana - Brescia, H.IV.2).

Negri G., Storia di Guastalla (Mantua - Biblioteca Comunale, no.1103).

Oldorici, F., Chronaca Veneta (Queriniana - Brescia, C.I.13).

### 2. COLLECTIONS OF DOCUMENTS

ed. G.F.Böhmer, Acta Imperii (Innsbruck 1870).

Commissioni di Rinaldo degli Albizzi per il comune di Firenze dal 1399 al 1433. (ed. C.Guasti. Documenti di Storia Italiana, Florence 1867-73).

Copialettere e Corrispondenze Gonzaghesche (Publ. Arch.St. no.59, Rome 1969).

Deutsche Reichstagsakten (Koenigliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, Munich 1867).

Dumont, T., Corps Universel Diplomatique (Amsterdam 1726-1731).

Lünig, J.C. Codex Italiae Diplomaticus (Frankfurt, 1725-1735).

Monumenta Conciliorum Generalium Saeculi XV (Vienna, 1857), XV,pt.1.

Osio, L., Documenti Diplomatici Tratti dagli Archivi Milanese (Milan 1877, reprinted 1970).

Predelli, R., I Libri Commemoriali della Repubblica di Venezia in Monumenti Storici pubblicati dalla R.dep.Veneta di Storia Patria, ser.1. vol.1; Venice 1876).

Theiner, A., Codex Diplomaticus Domini Temporalis S.Sedis (Vatican 1861-62)

### 3. CHRONICLES AND OTHER LITERARY SOURCES

- Aliprandi, B., Cronaca di Mantova (R.I.S. n.s. vol. xxiv)
- Amadei, F., Cronaca Universale di Mantova (Mantua 1955)
- Annales Forolivienses (R.I.S. vol. xxii)
- Aretino, L. De Origine et antiquitate urbis Mantue
- Azario, P. Liber Gestarum in Lombardia (R.I.S. n.s. vol. xvi)
- Billia, A. Historia Fratris Andreae Billii Patria Mediolanensis (R.I.S. vol. xix)
- Biondo, F. Decades (Venice 1483)
- Bonincontro, L. Chronicon Eugubrium (R.I.S. vol. xxi)
- Cronaca di Bologna (R.I.S. vol. xviii)
- Bracciolini, P. Historia Florentina (R.I.S. vol. xx)
- Campana, C., Storia Universale (Pavia - Bartoli 1601)
- Campano, G.A., De Vita et Gestis Bracci (R.I.S. vol. xix).
- Corio, B., Storia di Milano (Vinegia 1554).
- Delayto, I., de. Anales Estenses (R.I.S. vol. xviii)
- Decembrio, P.C., Vita Filippi Mariae Visconti (R.I.S. vol. xx)
- Diario Ferrarese (R.I.S. vol. xxiv).
- Equicola, M. Historia di Mantua in libri cinque (Mantua 1610).
- Fazio, B., De Viris Illustribus (Florence 1745).
- Grifonibus, M. de, Memoria Historica (R.I.S. vol. xviii).
- Manelmi, E., Commentariolum de obsidione Brixia a MCCCCXXXVIII (ed. G.A. Astezati, Brescia 1728).
- Maffei, S.A., Annali di Mantova (Torona 1675).
- Nerli, A., Chronicon (1017-1418) (R.I.S. appendix vol. xxiv).
- Odorici, F., Storie Bresciane (Brescia 1858).
- Platina, Commentariolus de Vita Victorini Feltrensis in Cremonensium Monumenta Romae Extantia (ed. T.A. Variani Rome 1778).
- Platina, Historia Inclytæ Urbis Mantuæ et Serenissime Familiae Gonzagæ (Vienna, 1675).
- Platina, De Vitis Pontif. Joannes XXIII (Louvain 1572).

Possevino, A., Gonzaga (Mantua - Osanna 1628)

Redusiis, A. de., Chronicon Tarvisinium (R.I.S. vol.xix)

Sabellico, A.C., Historia Rerum Venetiarum (Venice 1718).

Sanuto, M., Le Vite dei Duchi di Venezia (R.I.S. vol. xxii)

Simeoni, G., Comentarii sopra la Tetrarchia di Mantova e de'Gonzaghi (Venice 1548).

Simonetta, G., Rerum Gestarum Franciscus Sfortiae Mediolanensium Ducis Commentarii (ed. G. Soranzo, R.I.S. n.s. vol. xxi)

Soldo, C. da. Cronaca (ed. G.Brizzolara in R.I.S. n.s. vol. xxi. pt.iii)

Cronaca del Anonimo Veronese (Publ. della Soc.Veneta di storia Patria ed. G.Soranzo).

Parte inedita della Cronaca di Anonimo Veronese (1438-1445,1488-1491), (Nuova Historia, Verona 1955)

Spino, P., Istoria della vita e fatti dell'eccellente capitano di guerra Bartolomeo Colleoni (Bergamo 1569).

Villani, M. Historia Universalis (R.I.S. vols. xiii & xiv)

#### 4. OTHER WORKS

Affò, I. Istoria della Città e Ducato di Guastalla (Guastalla 1785-7)

Albicini, C. "Il Governo Visconteo di Bologna" (Atti e Memorie della R. Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Province di Romagna, 3rd ser.vols. 24-5, 1906-7).

Allessio, F., Storia di S. Bernardino da Siena e del suo tempo (Mondovi-Graziano 1899).

Arco, C., d', Studi intorno al Municipio di Mantova (Mantua 1872).

Arco, C. di, Storia di Mantova (Mantua 1872).

Arco, D. d' Dei Dominatori Gonzaga e del loro governo (Mantua 1871)

Baron, H. The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance (Princeton 1966).

Baron, H. Humanistic and Political Literature in Florence and Venice at the beginning of the Quattrocento (Cambridge, Mass.1955).

Baschet, A., Ricerche di documenti d'arte e di storia negli archivi di Mantova (Mantua 1866).

Battistella, A., "Alcuni documenti inediti sul Conte di Carmagnola" (A.S.L.) ser.3, xxxix, 1903).

Battistella, A., Carmagnola (Genoa 1889).

Becker, G., "Some common features of Italian urban experience" (Medievalia et Humanistica 1970)

Bellonci, M. Segreti dei Gonzagi (Milan 1947).

Benitti, A., Storia di Asola (Mantua 1952).

Benoit, E., Victorin de Feltre e l'education en Italie (Paris 1853).

Bernoni, D., Le Vicende di Asola (Rome 1976).

Bertolotti, A., I comuni e le provincie Mantovane (Mantua 1893).

Bertolotti, A., L'Archivio di Stato di Mantova. Cenni storici e descrittivi (Mantua, 1892).

Bertolotti, A., "Le Arti Minori alla Corte di Mantova nei secoli XV, XVI e XVII" (A.S.L. 1888)

Besta, E., "Venezia e la Valtellina nel secolo XV" (A.S.I. 1928)

Bettoni, F., Storia della Riviera di Salò (Brescia 1880)

Bevilaqua E., Informazioni sugli argini, sgoli e adaguamenti dello stato di Mantova (Mantua 1866).

Bisticci, V. da. "Notizie di alcune illustre donne del secolo XV" (A.S.L. ser.1. vol. iv. 1843).

Bonfiglio, F., Notizie storiche di Castelgoffredo (Brescia 1922)

Bologni, B., Memorie storiche dei comuni di Rivarolo e Bozzolo (Cremona 1855)

Bolognini, G., "Le relazioni tra le repubbliche di Firenze e di Venezia nel'ultimo ventennio del secolo XIV", (Archivio Veneto, IX 1895)

Borselli, F., "Documenti per la dominazione di Pandolfo Malatesta a Brescia" (Comm. Ateneo Brescia 1930-1, 1946-8, 1950).

Brinton, S., The Gonzaga Lords of Mantua (London 1927)

Calò, G., Vittorino da Feltre nel V. centenario della morte (Brescia 1947)

Campana, C., Alberi della famiglia Gonzaga (Mantua 1590).

Campo, A., Storia di Cremona (Milan 1645)

Canestrini, G., "Documenti per servire alla storia della milizia italiana" (A.S.L. XV.1850)

Caprioli E., Delle Historie Bresciane (Brescia - Marchetti 1585)

Carafa, D., Gli ammaestramenti militari (Naples - Campano 1608)

Carmassi, G., "Carteggi fra Mantova e Lucca nei Secoli XIV e XV", (R.A.V.M., n.s., X- XIII, 1918-20).

Cavalcabò, A., "Le vicende storiche di Viadana" (Bollettino Storico Cremonese 1952-3).

Cessi, R., "La politica veneziana di Terraferma dalla caduta dei Carraresi al lodo di Genova" (Memorie Storiche Forogiuliesi, v. 1909)

Cessi, R., Storia della Repubblica di Venezia (Milan 1968).

Cessi, R., "Venezia neutrale nella seconda lega anti-Viscontea, 1392-7", (Nuovo archivio Veneto, XXVIII, 1914).

Chittolini, G., "La crisi delle libertà comunali e le origine dello stato territoriale". (R.S.I., Ixxxii, 1970).

Chittolini, G., La crisi degli ordinamenti comunali e le origini dello stato del Rinascimento, (Istituzioni e società nella storia d'Italia, 2; Problemi e prospettive) (Bologna 1979).

Gibrario, L. "Degli amori e della morte di Agnese Visconti, moglie di Francesco Gonzaga, (Opuscoli storici e letterari editi ed inediti 1835).

Cipolla, C., "Per la storia delle terre della 'Bassa Lombarda' in Studi in onore di A. Saponi (Milan 1957).

Cognasso, F., "L'alleanza sabaudo-milanese contro Venezia nel 1434" (A.S.L. ser. 5, ii, 1918).

Cognasso, F., Amedeo VIII (Turin 1913).

Cognasso, F., "Le origini della signoria lombarda" (A.S.L., ser.8, vi, 1956).

Collison, Morley, L., The story of the Sforzas (London 1933).

Colorni, V., "Prestito ebraico e comunità ebraiche nell'Italia centrale e settentrionale con particolare riguardo alla comunità di Mantova" (Rivista di Storia del diritto italiano vii, 1935, fasc.3).

Coniglio, G. "Fonti archivistiche per la storia di Mantova" (A.S.L. ser.8.\*, 1960)

Coniglio, G., (ed.), Mantova - La Storia (Mantua 1959-1963).

Curti, F., Compendio degli assedi e blocchi di Mantova con relative note, dalla sua origine ai nostri giorni (Mantua 1889).

Davari, S., "I palazzi dell'antico Comune di Mantova e gli incendi da essi subiti", (R.A.V.M. 1887-8)

Davari, S., Le notizie intorno allo Studio Pubblico ed ai maestri del secoli XV e XVI che tennero scuola a Mantova, tratte dall'Archivio storico Gonzaga di Mantova (Mantua 1876).

Davari, S., Notizie storiche topografiche della città di Mantova nei secoli xiii, xiv e xv. (Mantua 1903)

Donesmondi, I., Dell'Istoria Ecclesiastica di Mantova (Mantua 1613-1616).

Eroli, G., Erasmus Gattamelata da Narni, suoi monumenti e sua famiglia, (Rome, 1876).

Faccioli, E., (ed.) Mantova - Le lettere (Mantua 1959-1963).

Farrato, P., Bandi Mantovani del secolo XIV (Mantua 1976).

Fino, A., Storia di Crema (Crema 1711).

Fрати, L. "La guerra di Gian Galeazzo Visconti contro Mantova nel 1397", (A.S.L., ser.2,ii, 1887).

Gabotto, F., "Contributo alla storia delle relazioni tra Amedeo VIII e Filippo Maria Visconti " (Bollettino della Società Pavese di Storia Patria 1903),

Gambara, A., Vittorino da Feltre (Turin 1946).

Gasco, M. "Pareri dati al Marchese Gianfrancesco Gonzaga nel 1430 circa la ricostruzione economico dello stato (R.S.I. ser.IV, 5, iii, 1934).

Gionta, S., Fioretto delle cronache di Mantova (Mantua 1844).

Girolla, P., "La biblioteca di Francesco Gonzaga secondo l'inventario del 1407" (Atti e Memorie dell'Accademia Virgilliana di Mantova, xiv-xvii, 1923).

Girolla, P., Pittori e miniatori a Mantova sulla fine del '300 e sul principio del '400 (Mantua 1921).

Glénisson, J. "La politique de Louis de Gonzague, Seigneur de Mantoue, pendant la guerre entre Gregoie XI et Bernabò Visconti (1371-1375)" (Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes CIX, 1951).

Herre, H., "Die Beziehungen König Sigismunds in Italien Von Herbst 1412 bis zum Herbst 1414", (Quellen und Forschungen aus ital.Archiven und Bibl.IV, 1901).

Hofmann, B., "Barbara von Hohenzollern, Markgräfin von Mantua. Ein Lebensbild aus dem XV Jahrhundert." (Jahresbericht des Historische Vereins für Mittelfranken 1881)

Intra, G.B., Agnese Visconti, racconto storico (Milan 1898).

Intra, G.B. "Degli storici e dei cronisti Mantovani" (R.A.V.M., 1878).

Jones, P.J. The Malatesta of Rimini and the Papal State (Cambridge, 1974).

Kagelmacher, E., Philippo Maria Visconti und König Sigismund (Berlin 1885).

Kristeller, K. "Barbara von Brandenburg Markgräfin von Mantua" (Hohenzollern Jahrbuch, Berlin, 1899).

Landogna, F., La Politicadei Visconti in Toscana (Milan 1928).

Lazzarini, V., Degli Assedi e Blocchi di Mantova (Mantua 1889).

Lodi, G., Mantova e le guerre memorabili nelle valle del Po (Mantua 1877).

Longhi, M. "Niccolò Piccinino in Bologna" (R. Deputazione di Storia Patria di Romagna, 3rd ser.xxiv. 1906).

- Lucchini, L., Bozzolo e suoi domini (Cremona 1883).
- Lupi, C., "Relazione tra la Repubblica di Firenze e i Conti e i Duchi di Savoia", (Giornale Storico degli Archivi Toscani, vii, 1863).
- Luzio, A., "L'Archivio Gonzaga di Mantova. La corrispondenza familiare, amministrativa e diplomatica dei Gonzaga", (R.A.V.M. Monumenta ser.1, 1922).
- Luzio, A., "Cinque lettere di Vittorino da Feltre" (Archivio Veneto, n.s.vol. xxxvi, 1888).
- Luzio, A., "I Corradi di Gonzaga", (A.S.L. ser.4, xxxviii, 1913).
- Luzio, A., Documenti per la storia delle relazioni diplomatici tra Verona e Mantova (Milan 1901).
- Luzio, A., & Renier, R., "I Filelfo e l'umanesimo alla Corte dei Gonzaga", (Giornale Storico della letteratura italiana, vol. xvi, 1890).
- Luzio, A., & Renier, R., "Il Platina e i Gonzaga", (Giornale Storico, iii, 1889).
- Mallett, M. Mercenaries and their Masters, (London, 1974).
- Mallett, M. "Venice and its Condottieri, 1404-54", (In Renaissance Venice, ed., J.Hale, (London 1973).
- Mahnke, E.W., The Political Career of a Condottiere Prince, Ludovico Gonzaga 1444-1466, (Cambridge, Mass.1974, unpublished Ph.D. thesis).
- Manaresi, C., I Registri Viscontei (Milan 1915).
- Masali, G., La Provincia di Mantova (Mantua 1889).
- Matteucci, D., Le Chiese Artistiche del Mantovano (Mantua 1902).
- Mazzoldi, L., L'Archivio dei Gonzaga di Castiglione dell Stiviere (Rome 1961).
- Massoldi, L., Mantova - La Storia (Mantua 1961).
- Mesquita, D.M. Bueno de, Gian Galeazzo Visconti : Duke of Milan (1341-1402) : A Study in the Political Career of an Italian Despot (Cambridge, 1941).
- Messina, G., Luce nei Secoli. Saggi di Storiografia (Lodi, 1937).
- Michielotto, Istituzioni di diritto commerciale e del diritto generale delle obbligazioni, (Mantua 1931).
- Morlet, A., Victorin de Feltre et la Maison Joyeuse ou un lycée au xv siècle en Italie, (Le Havre 1880)
- Mosto, A., da. L'Archivio di Stato di Venezia. Indice generale, storico, descrittivo ed analittico (Rome 1937-40).
- Morani, E., & Perina, C., Mantova - Le arti (Mantua 1961)



- Muir, D., A history of Milan under the Visconti (London 1924).
- Muratori, L.A., Annali di Italia (Florence 1827).
- Murgia, A., I Gonzaga (Milan 1972).
- Nardi, B., Vittorino da Feltre al paese natale di Virgilio (Rome 1938).
- Paccagnini, G., (ed.) Mantova - Le arti (Mantua 1960-65).
- Paccagnini, G., Il Palazzo Ducale di Mantova (Turin 1969).
- Paglia, E., "La casa Giocosa di Vittorino da Feltre in Mantova" (A.S.L. ser.2. xi, 1884).
- Parazzi, A., Origini e vicende di Viadana (Viadana - Remagni 1893).
- Partner, P., The Papal State under Martin V. (British School at Rome 1958).
- Pasqualigo, G.D., Lonato e contorni (Castiglione delle Stiviere 1873).
- Pirchain, G., "Italian und Kaiser Karl IV in der zeit seiner Zweiten Romfahrt" (Quellen und Forschungen aus dem Gebiete Geschichte 1930).
- Pesce, A., Sulle relazioni tra la repubblica di Genova e Filippo Maria Visconti (Turin 1921).
- Picotti, G.B. "Alcune osservazioni sulle teorie delle origini della signoria in Italia" (R.S.I. ser.iv, i.1926).
- Pieri, P., Il Rinascimento e la crisi Militare Italiana (Turin 1952).
- Pieri, P., "La Scienza Militare Italiana nel Rinascimento" (R.S.I. 50, ii, 1933).
- Pullan, B., A History of Early Renaissance Italy (London - Lane 1973).
- Putelli, P., "Mezzo secolo di storia della Val Camonica 1420-1470" (Rivista di Scienze Storiche Pavia 1907).
- Quazza, R., La Diplomazia Gonzaghesca (Mantua 1941)
- Quazza R., Mantova Attraverso i Secoli (Mantua 1933).
- Ramboldi, R., "Una macchinazione di Cansignorio della Scala a danno dei Gonzaga" (Rendiconti del Reale Istituto Lombardo 1897).
- Rambaldoni, "Vittorino da Feltre. Lettere alla Marchesa Paola Malatesta Gonzaga", (Archivio Veneto, n.s. xxxvi, 1888).
- Raulich, I., La caduta dei Carraresi (Padua 1890)
- Raulich, I., La Prima Guerra tra i Veneziani e Filippo Maria Visconti (R.S.I. 5, iii, 1888).
- Regonini, G., Ostiano - Le origini ed alcune note storiche (Ostiano 1968).
- Reumont, A., Della Diplomazia Italiana dal sec. XIII al XVI (Florence 1857).
- Riboldi, E. & Seregni, G., "Studi e ricerche per il repertorio diplomatico Visconteo. I documenti Viscontei del Archivio Gonzaga" (A.S.L. ser. 4, xxxi, 1904).
- Ricotti, C., Storia delle Compagnie di Ventura in Italia (Turin 1893 2nd ed.).

- Romanin, S., Storia Documentata di Venezia 3rd ed. vol. iv. (Venice 1973).
- Romano, C., "Contributi alla storia della ricostruzione del ducato Milanese sotto Filippo Maria Visconti" (A.S.L. ser. 3 XIII 1897)
- Rosmini, D. de, Idea del ottimo precettore nella vita e disciplina di Vittorino da Feltre (Milan 1845).
- Rubinstein, N. "Italian reactions to Terrafirma expansion in the 15th Century" (Renaissance Venice, ed., J.Hale (London 1973).
- Ruberti, U. Quistello nei secoli andati (S.Benedetto Po 1899).
- Saitta, G., L'Educazione dell'Umanesimo in Italia (Venice 1938).
- Santorio, C., "La biblioteca dei Gonzaga e cinque suoi codici nella Trivulziana di Milano" (Arte, pensiero e cultura a Mantova nel primo Rinascimento (Florence 1965).
- Santorno, C., "La politica unitaria italiana dei Visconti nei secoli XIV e XV" (Atti e memorie del primo congresso storico lombardo, 1936).
- Scandovelli, G., Vittorino da Feltre (Mantua 1889).
- Schiff, A., Kaiser Sigismunds Italienische Politik (Frankfurt 1910).
- Sestan, E., "Le origini delle Signorie" (Bollettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano 1961).
- Seston, E., "Per la storia della città nell'alto Medioevo" (in Studi in onore di A. Saponi Milan 1957).
- Simeoni, L. "Le origini del conflitto Veneto-Scaligiero 1336-9" (Atti e Memorie della R. Acad. delle Scienze di Bologna 1930).
- Smith, R.E.G., Filippo Maria Visconti and his condottieri (unpublished B.Litt thesis, Oxford, 1953).
- Soranzo, G., "L'ultima campagna del Gattamelata al servizio della Repubblica Veneta (1438-40). (Archivio Veneto, vol. lx 1957).
- Spangenberg, H., Cangrande I della Scala (Berlin 1892).
- Tarducci, F., "L'alleanza Visconti - Gonzaga del 1438 contro la Repubblica Veneta" (A.S.L. ser.3, xxii, 1899).
- Tarducci, F., Cecilia Gonzaga e Oddantonio da Montefeltro (Mantua - Mondovi, 1897).
- Tarducci, F., "Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, Signore di Mantova (1407-1420). (A.S.L. ser.3, xxxiv-v 1902).
- Toderini, T., "La prima condotta di Francesco Sforza per Venezia" (Archivio Veneto vol.ix.1875)
- Tonelli, F., Ricerche storiche di Mantova (Mantua 1797).
- Tonini, L., Rimini nella Signoria dei Malatesta (Rimini - Albertini 1882).

Torelli P., "L'Archivio Gonzaga di Mantova" (R.A.V.M. Monumenta I 1920).

Torelli, P., "Capitanato del Popolo e Vicariato Imperiale come elementi costitutivi della Signoria Bonnacolsiana" (R.A.V.M.1923).

Treccani degli Alfieri (ist.) Storia di Brescia (Milan 1963).

Treccani degli Alfieri (ist.) Storia di Milano (Milan 1953).

Treppo M.del. "Gli aspetti organizzativi, economici e sociali di una compagnia di ventura italiana" (R.S.I.,85, ii, 1973).

Valeri, N. L'eredità di Gian Galeazzo Visconti (Turin 1938).

Valeri, N. L'Italia nell' Età dei Principati (Mondadori 1969).

Valeri, N., La Vita di Facino Cane (Turin 1940).

Valeri, N., "Lo stato visconteo alla morte di Giangaleazzo Visconti" (R.S.I., xix, 1935.)

Valois, N. Le Pape et le Concile (Paris, 1909)

Verci, Storia della Marca Trivigiana e Veronese (Venice 1786-91).

Venin, P.G. Elogio del B. Oderico da Pordenone (Venice 1761)

Vittani G., Gli Atti Cancellereschi Viscontei, pt.1. Decreti e carteggi interni (Milan 1920). Pt. 2 Carteggi extra Dominium (Milan 1929).

Volta, C.L., Compendio cronologico-critico della Storia di Mantova (Mantua 1807-1827)

Volta, C.L., Saggio storico-critico sulla Tipografia Mantovana del secolo XV Raccolte Ferrarese di Opuscoli Scientifici e Letterari vol.19 Venice 1787).

Volta, C.L., Storia di Mantova (Mantua - Agazzi 1827).

Volta, Z., "Papa Martino a Milano" (A.S.L. ser.2, iv, 1886).

Waller, B.M.L., The Diplomatic Relations of the Gonzaga of Mantua in the 14th Century (unpublished B.Litt thesis in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, 1953).

Zanelli, A., "Brescia sotto la dominazione di Filippo Maria Visconti" (R.S.I. 9,iii, 1892).

Zanelli, A., La Signoria del Malatesta in Brescia (A.S.L. ser.6, 1 1931).

Zucchetti, G., Gli Statuti di Mantova (Mantua 1857).

GIANFRANCESCO'S FAMILY

Francesco (d.1407)  
(4th Capitano)

m

Margherita Malatesta

|  
GIANFRANCESCO (b. May 1395 d. Sept.1444)  
(5th Capitano. 1st Marquis 1433)

m

Paola Malatesta (1410)

|  
Ludovico (b.5 June 1414  
d.12 June 1478)  
(2nd Marquis)

m.

Barbara of Brandenburg  
(Nov.1433)

|  
Carlo (d.Dec.1456)

m

- 1) Lucia d'Este (1436)  
2) Ringarda de Manfredi  
(1445)

|  
Gian Lucido  
(d.11 June 1448)

|  
Margherita

m

Leonello d'Este

|  
Lucia  
(died early)

|  
Alessandro (d.16 Jan 1461)

m

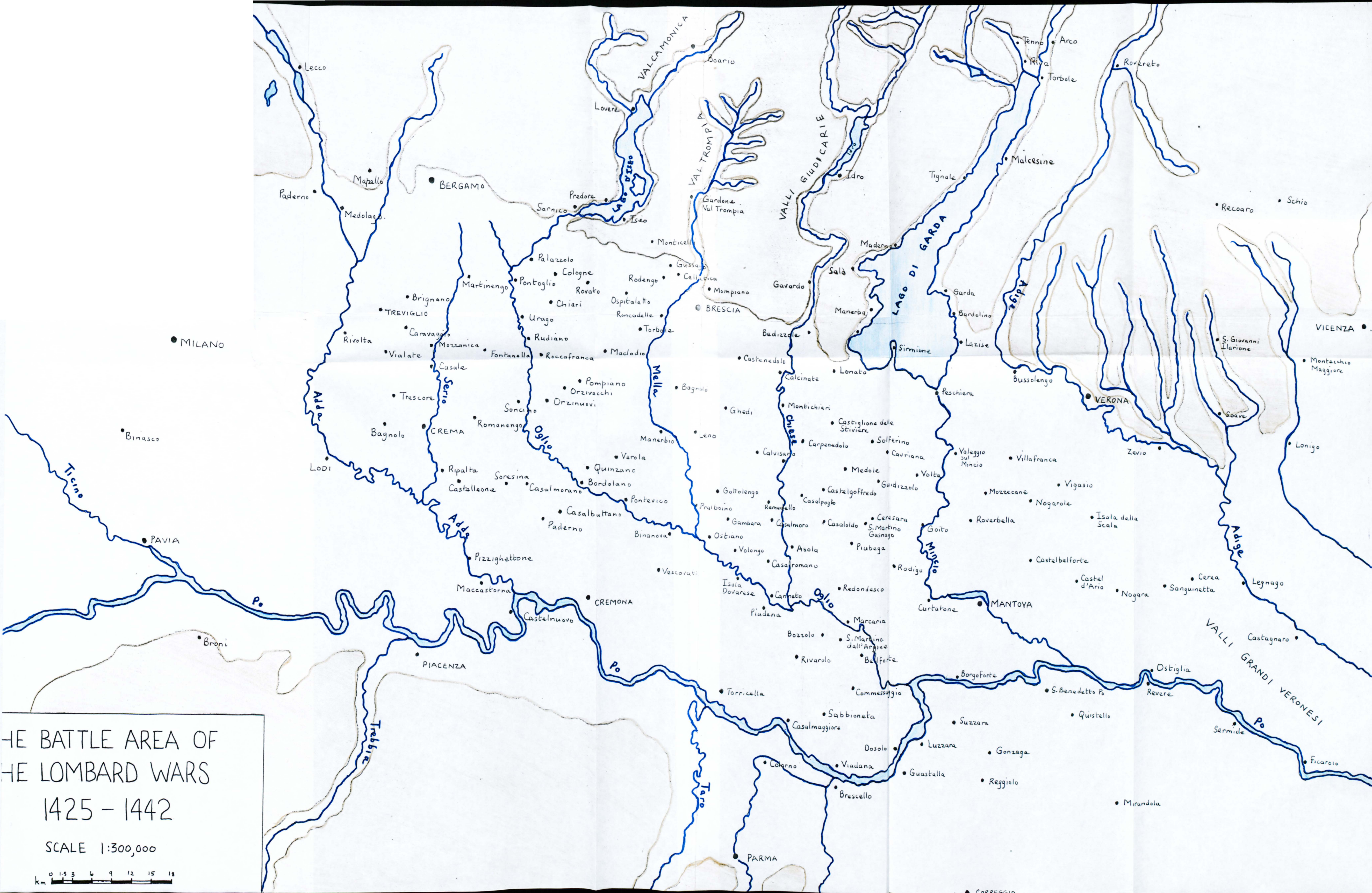
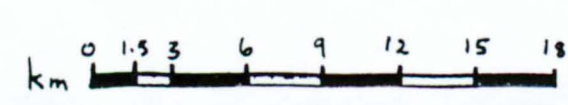
Agnesina de Montefeltro  
(5 March 1445)

|  
Cecilia (d.1451)  
(Suora Chiara)



THE BATTLE AREA OF  
THE LOMBARD WARS  
1425 - 1442

SCALE 1:300,000





# TOWNS AND CITIES OF NORTHERN ITALY

Scale  
0 10 20 30 40 km.

Approximate extent  
of Mantovano during  
the period of  
Gianfrancesco's rule

